WHY SELLING TO THE POOR WON'T MAKE THEM RICH

G. PASCAL ZACHARY

WHY HARVARD'S FACULTY ATTACKED LAWRENCE SUMMERS

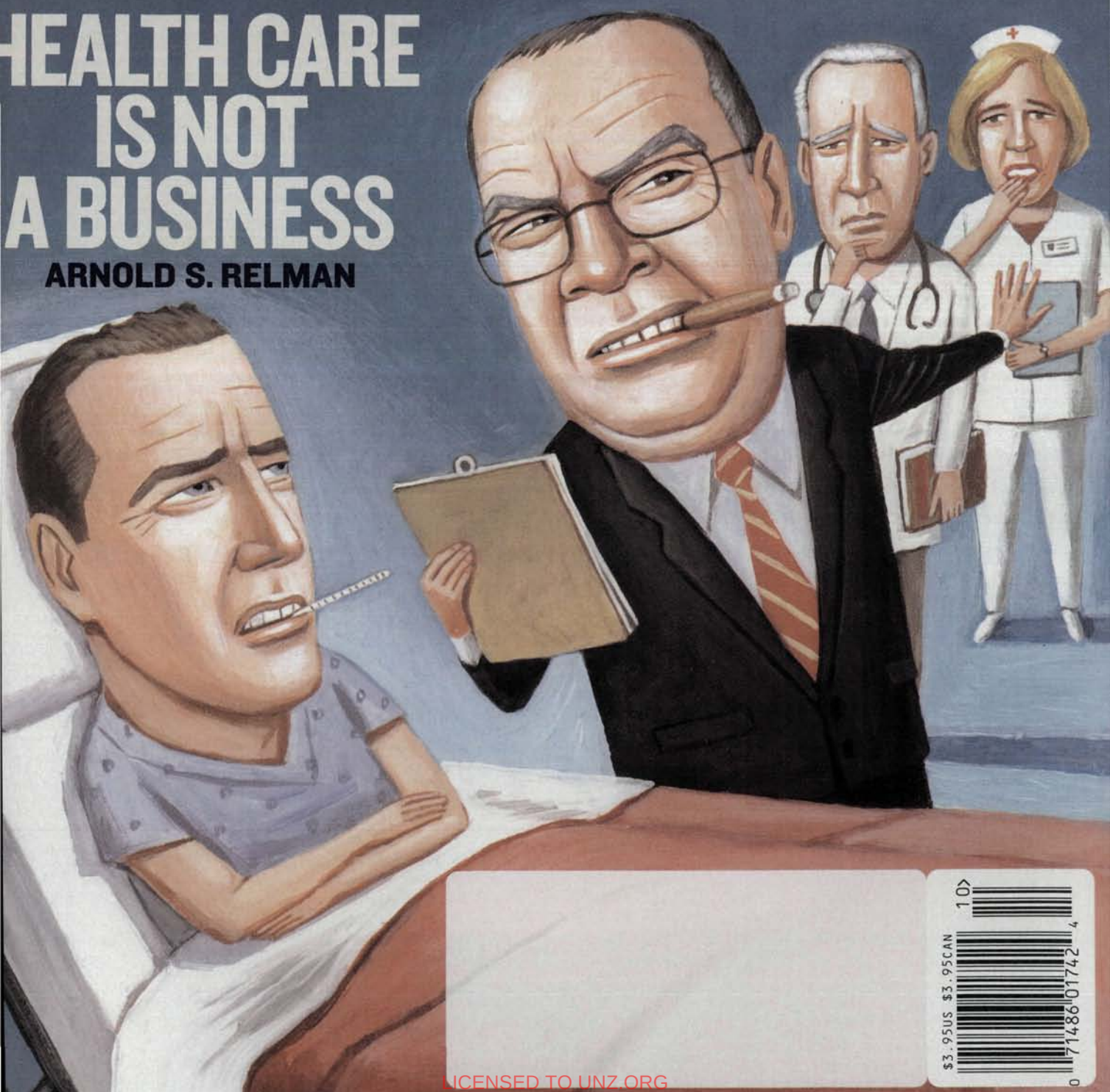
JASON ZENGERLE

WWW.TNR.COM ▶ MARCH 7, 2005

THE NEW REPUBLIC

HEALTH CARE IS NOT A BUSINESS

ARNOLD S. RELMAN



$3.95US $3.95CAN

10

0 71486 01742 4

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hot Button Issues

If you can't wait to read the nation's most influential political & cultural journal each week, we understand. That's why subscribers to **The New Republic** are entitled to get a special bonus with their magazine.

The New Republic Digital. A fast way to get TNR ahead of schedule. Every week.

As a member of **The New Republic Digital** you'll get:

- A full digital PDF version of the print magazine available *on Fridays, three full days before the issue hits newsstands*
- All print content also available at **TNR Online** (www.tnr.com)
- Access to all daily web-only articles on **TNR Online**
- Full access to archives dating back 5 years
- Politics and Books & The Arts weekly newsletters e-mailed to your home or office

To sign up for TNR Digital, go to www.tnr.com/digital

THE NEW REPUBLIC DIGITAL

You'll be the first to know.

tnr

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MARTIN PERETZ

EDITOR Peter Beinart (on leave)
ACTING EDITOR J. Peter Scoblic
LITERARY EDITOR Leon Wieseltier
MANAGING EDITOR Jeremy Kahn
FOREIGN EDITOR Joshua Kurlantzick
SENIOR EDITORS
Jonathan Chait, Jonathan Cohn, Michelle Cottle, Michael Crowley, Gregg Easterbrook, Franklin Foer, Ruth Franklin, John B. Judis, Lawrence F. Kaplan, Ryan Lizza, Noam Scheiber, Andrew Sullivan, James Wood, Jason Zengerle
LEGAL AFFAIRS Jeffrey Rosen
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
Adam B. Kushner
TNR ONLINE
Richard Just, Editor
Christiane Culhane, Culture Editor
FILMS Stanley Kauffmann
THEATER Robert Brustein
ART Jed Perl
MUSIC David Hajdu
ARCHITECTURE Martin Filler
DANCE Jennifer Homans
TELEVISION Lee Siegel
POETRY EDITOR Glyn Maxwell
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Fouad Ajami, David A. Bell, Paul Berman, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Nathan Glazer, Anthony Grafton, David Grann, Robert Kagan, Michael Kinsley, Charles Krauthammer, Jeremy McCarter, John McWhorter, Sherwin B. Nuland, Christopher Orr, David Rieff, Maggie Scarf, Ronald Steel, Cass R. Sunstein, Alan Taylor, E.V. Thaw, Helen Vendler, Michael Walzer, Sean Wilentz, Alan Wolfe, Robert Wright
CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
Jack Coughlin, David Cowles, Vint Lawrence, David Schorr
FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS
Massoud Ansari, Masha Gessen, Yossi Klein Halevi, Janine Zacharia
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Spencer Ackerman
ART/DESIGN DIRECTION
Joe Heroun, Christine Car/H2C Media
EDITORIAL-CORPORATE COORDINATOR
Laura E. Obolensky
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR AND INFORMATION-TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR
Bruce Steinke
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Henry Riggs
ASSISTANT EDITORS
Kara Baskin, Marisa Katz, Clay Risen
ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR
Alexander Barnes Dryer
ASSISTANT LITERARY EDITOR
Deborah Friedell
ASSISTANT POETRY EDITOR Melanie Rehak
REPORTER-RESEARCHERS
Telis Demos, T. A. Frank, Keelin McDonell

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER Stephanie Sandberg
GENERAL MANAGER Allen Chin
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Lori Fleishman Dorr
ONLINE BUSINESS DIRECTOR Ari Gersen
ONLINE MARKETING MANAGER Emilie Harkin

ADVERTISING SALES & MARKETING
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Richard Parker
DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING, WEST
Joan Stapleton Tooley
ACCOUNT MANAGER Julie Sturmak
PUBLISHING REPRESENTATIVE
Perry Janoski, Allston-Cherry, Ltd.
MARKETING MANAGER Kate Genser
BUSINESS ASSISTANT Alexandra Scott

TNR/ON SYMPOSIA ON PUBLIC POLICY
Joan Daly

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION
ACCOUNTING MANAGER Debra Sotelo
ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT Vanessa Wilson
BUSINESS ASSISTANT Grant Loomis
BUSINESS INTERN Jaime Pearlstine

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ROGER HERTOG, Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ
MICHAEL STEINHARDT

THE NEW REPUBLIC
Updated daily. On the Web at www.tnr.com.

THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

MARCH 7, 2005 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,703 VOLUME 232

Cover Story

Arnold S. Relman **23** **The Health of Nations** The problems of our dysfunctional and extravagant health care system will not go away on their own. But, to solve them, we must first dispel the delusion that medical care is a business like any other, governed by the principles of the free market. A withering look at some dogmas about health care in the United States, and a proposal for reform.

Politics & the World

4 **CORRESPONDENCE**
Is Phil Bredesen the next Democratic hope? &c.

Noam Scheiber **6** **TRB | Risk Tolerance** Social Security privatization is a bigger political loser for Republicans than even Democrats think.

The Editors **7** **Morally Bankrupt** The bankruptcy bill is bad for American workers and American values. To the Democrats, it should be a golden opportunity.

8 **NOTEBOOK** Jacques Chirac smells, &c.

Spencer Ackerman **10** **Inside Job** President Bush hired John Negroponte because he knows where Washington's power centers are. The question is, can he be one of them?

Jason Zengerle **11** **Harvard Coup** Lawrence Summers has been an aggressive university president—which is exactly what Harvard wanted when it hired him, and why he's in trouble now.

Yossi Klein Halevi **14** **Jerusalem Dispatch: In Withdrawal** For years, Israel's religious Zionists have sought a greater role in the army. Now that they have it, many wish they didn't.

G. Pascal Zachary **16** **Poor Idea** Business Professor C. K. Prahalad thinks he has discovered the way to cure poverty: Treat the poor as consumers, not charity cases. Too bad there's little evidence it will work.

Marisa Katz **34** **NEW YORK DIARIST | Photo Finish**

Books & the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann **20** **FILMS | Earth and Heaven** *Turtles Can Fly* depicts teenage angst in Kurdistan; Marco Bellocchio soldiers on with *My Mother's Smile*.

David Hajdu **21** **MUSIC | A Nice Young Man** Josh Groban's pop confectionery appeals to old women of all ages.

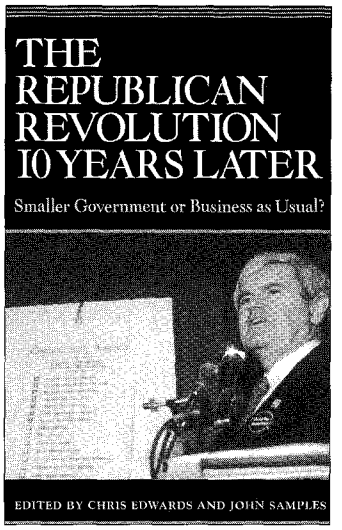
Rowan Ricardo Phillips **28** **POEM** | *Closing Night's Nocturne*

Helen Vendler **30** **Attention, Shoppers** *Where Shall I Wander: New Poems* by John Ashbery

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY *Charlie Powell*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Era of Big Government Is Not Over



The GOP came into office in 1994, promising revolutionary changes to government. Why did the 1994 landslide occur? Did Americans get the major policy changes promised? Have GOP reforms run out of steam after 10 years? In this essay collection, 18 experts—including the two key figures of the Republican revolution, Newt Gingrich and Dick Armey, and several Cato Institute scholars—provide insightful and thought-provoking answers to these questions and more.

$19.95 cloth
$13.95 paper

Available in bookstores nationwide or by calling 800-767-1241.

www.cato.org

CATO INSTITUTE

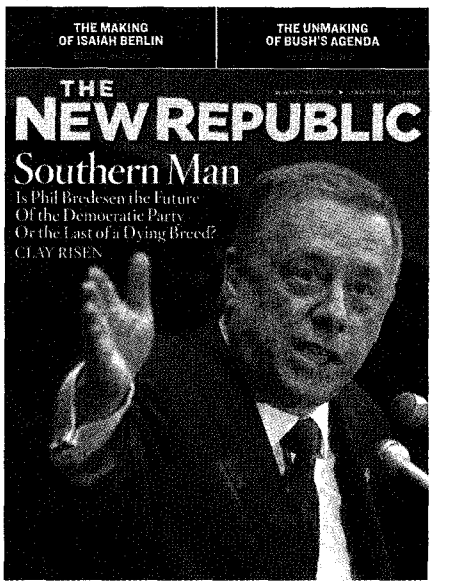
CORRESPONDENCE

MEMPHIS BLUES

CLAY RISEN'S LIST OF GOVERNOR Phil Bredesen's accomplishments as mayor of Nashville—such as landing the Tennessee Titans and opening a downtown library—overlooked one of great significance but little note ("Southern Man," January 31). Until his tenure as mayor, any reference to the state's capital city by the national media, or even by Nashville residents, was invariably, "Nashville, Tennessee." It seemed necessary to identify the state as well as the city—like saying, "Podunk, Tennessee" or "Bell Buckle, Tennessee," which is my hometown. Today, Nashville needs no further identification. The first time I noticed the change, the Titans were playing a nationally televised Monday night game, and the sportscasters simply said "Nashville." Thanks for a good read about a great governor and—we hope—future president.

SUE ALLISON
Bell Buckle, Tennessee

RISEN'S ARTICLE FAILED TO MENtion the dismay of the state's traditional Democratic base—the counties containing Memphis and Nashville comprise one-third of the state's registered voters—at several of Bredesen's actions: his labor-crushing workers' compensation legislation; his half-hearted campaigning for John Kerry in Tennessee (in contrast to the efforts of thousands of committed Democrats in the state, including Representative Harold Ford, a national Kerry-Edwards co-chairman); his failure to secure victories for three legislative candidates for whom he actively campaigned in 2004; the fact that his TennCare "reform" bill will remove access to health care for thousands of poor and infirm Tennesseans (a catastrophe, given the Bush administration's proposed cuts in Medicaid); and, most recently, his comments to a Chattanooga newspaper that his small business–decimating



10 percent sales tax is "not that much different from" an income tax, which would not be levied on food and other essential services for the poor and disenfranchised. Bredesen is going to have a hard time recapturing the same level of enthusiasm among Tennessee Democrats in 2006 that was present in 2002.

ROGER A. SCHECTER
Nashville, Tennessee

MASSAD CHARADE

AS COLUMBIA STUDENTS INVOLVED in the current Middle East studies crisis at Columbia University, we very much appreciate your coverage of the issue ("Notebook," January 24). But the biased nature of the recently appointed committee is even worse than you think. Dean Lisa Anderson was an adviser of Joseph Massad—one of the professors students have charged with abusing his power—when he earned his doctorate at Columbia; Ira Katznelson, a member of the political science department in which Massad trained, was the vice president of arts and sciences of Columbia University when these incidents took place and knew about a good number of

THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 232, Number 8, Issue 4,703, March 7, 2005. (Printed in the United States on February 24, 2005.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 28 & April 4, May 2 & 9, June 6 & 13, July 11 & 18, August 22 & 29, November 28 & December 5, and December 26, 2005 through January 9, 2006) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Grant Loomis at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 455-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97, foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2005 by The New Republic, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

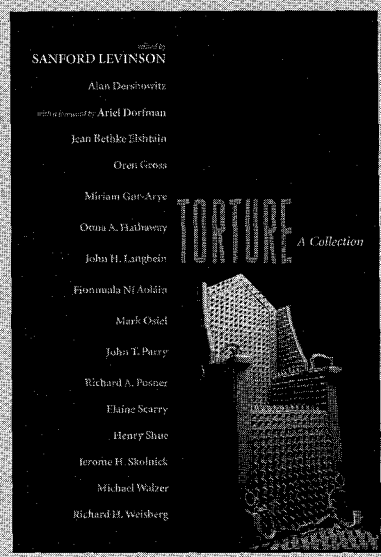
them (he is also a member of the Center for Comparative Literature and Society, of which Hamid Dabashi is the director of graduate studies); Mark Mazower has suggested publicly, in the *Financial Times*, that the United States went to war in Iraq for the sake of Israel, and he has implied that Israel is in part responsible for global anti-Semitism (in other words, he blames the victims for hatred espoused against them); and, as you noted, Farah Jasmine Griffin and Jean Howard both signed the petition calling for Columbia University to divest its holdings from companies doing business with the Israeli army, thereby proving that they are willing to make what President Lee Bollinger himself called "grotesque and offensive" analogies in order to further their political goals.

AHARON HORWITZ
ARIEL BEERY
New York, New York

AS A COLUMBIA ALUMNA AND A former student of Massad, I have a very difficult time commiserating with your Notebook item. THE NEW REPUBLIC mentions that Columbia students were intimidated for years before being liberated by an "underground" filmmaker. But the David Project is actually a politically motivated campus watch group whose intentions are to promote its own interests rather than to encourage students' freedom of expression. Massad's class was recommended to me by a Jewish student. I took the class with a very close friend who was also Jewish. We found Massad to be affable and open to listening to our opinions. Did he agree with them all the time? No. But his ripostes forced us to evaluate our opinions and back them up with historical and social evidence. Isn't that what college is about—not being spoon-fed opinions but actually having to come up with your own? Most of the critics of Columbia's Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures department have never even stepped foot inside its classrooms and are criticizing the professors' viewpoints based on external sources. Columbia University classes force you to think critically; if this is TNR's idea of "bludgeon[ing] students into silence or conformity," then I fear the future state of academia.

JIYOUNG LEE
New York, New York

CRUCIAL LEGAL ISSUES



"The wall between the liberal campus and a conservative, utilitarian-minded military breaks down because the questions are so serious that few of this book's contributors want to engage in polemics, and few—to their credit—ever seem completely comfortable with their own conclusions."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

SANFORD LEVINSON

This book brings together leading lawyers, political theorists, social scientists, and public intellectuals to debate the advisability of maintaining the absolute ban on torture and to reflect on what it says about our societies if we do—or do not—adhere to it in all circumstances.

$29.95 LAW AT OXFORD WWW.OUP.COM/US/LAW

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

NEWS... THEN WHAT?

Insight. Analysis. Informed opinions.

THE NEW REPUBLIC
The Power of Ideas.

Subscribe today at www.tnr.com/subscribe or call 1-800-827-1289

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Risk Tolerance

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

IF I WERE A CONGRESSIONAL Republican, the thing I'd worry about most is ... well, the thing I'd worry about most is the unwritten rule requiring me to get a really bad haircut. But the second thing I'd worry about is why my party's leadership keeps lying to me about the politics of Social Security. My most recent cause for concern would have been a closed-door meeting between Republican National Committee Chairman Ken Mehlman and Republican senators last Tuesday. (No lowly House member I.) One person in attendance told the congressional newspaper *Roll Call* that Mehlman claimed the president's "practical experience" had taught him Social Security privatization "is good politics and policy." "The water is good. Jump in," is how the source characterized Mehlman's take on the matter.

Being a faithful Republican senator, I'd want to believe Mehlman with all my heart. But I'd also worry that privatization could be a much, much worse issue for the GOP than anyone, Republican or Democrat, has suggested.

Karl Rove likes to say that no Republican incumbent has lost a seat in the last six years thanks to privatization. But that claim only really applies to one person: Louisiana Senator David Vitter. He's pretty much the only Republican congressional candidate who has run on a bona fide privatization proposal—that is, diverting Social Security revenue into private accounts and cutting benefits or raising taxes to fund the transition costs. And Vitter didn't even endorse benefit cuts; he just didn't disavow them. (South Carolina Senator Jim DeMint wasn't in a competitive race *until* privatization and tax reform became issues.)

Just about every other Republican in an even vaguely competitive race has punted. South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, frequently cited as evidence of Rove's point, promised not to cut benefits during his 2002 campaign. "Everybody gets guaranteed their check," he said on "Meet the Press." The most specific Bush ever got on the campaign trail was a vague sentence in the middle of a gauzy riff on ownership, as when he announced at the Republican convention, "We must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their taxes in a personal account—a nest egg you can call your own." Proposing to give voters a nest egg without mentioning the attendant benefit cuts is a bit like promising voters an endless supply of beer without mentioning the attendant love handles. In neither case does it take account of the heavily back-loaded costs.

But, of course, it's the prospect of lower benefits, not privatization per se, that gives Social Security its "third-rail" reputation. Just ask the 26 House Republicans looking for work in November of 1982, six months after Ronald Reagan proposed cutting Social Security benefits by $40 billion over three years—and Democrats wrapped it around their necks. (Privatization wasn't on many people's radar screens back in the early '80s.)

Republicans argue that, thanks to the dramatic rise of stock ownership since 1982, the landscape for privatization has improved. There may be some truth to that. But, in other ways, the landscape has gotten worse. A recent Gallup poll found that people making $30,000 to $50,000 per year oppose privatization by 19 points; people making more than $75,000 support it, though only 49 to 47 percent. That difference in the margin is important; it suggests working-class people oppose privatization much more passionately than affluent voters support it.

And that would make sense. An affluent voter knows he's going to retire in relative comfort whether or not Social Security is privatized; for a voter who sees Social Security as his main source of retirement income, the prospect of exchanging private accounts for benefit cuts is pretty alarming. Recall here the political price congressional Republicans paid when they merely flirted with "slowing the growth" of Medicare in the mid-'90s. Put it all together, and it seems possible, even likely, that the practical effect of Social Security privatization would be to reverse the now-familiar trend of working-class voters ranking social issues above economics—a trend essential for maintaining a Republican majority in Congress.

But don't take my word for it. Just look at the House Republicans who have expressed reservations about privatization either this year or in the past. (The blogger Joshua Micah Marshall has placed most of them on a list he dubs the "conscience caucus.") By my count, roughly half of the more than two-dozen skeptics represent large working-class areas. Among them are Candice Miller, whose district includes Macomb County, Michigan (home of the original "Reagan Democrats"); Mark Green, Geoff Davis, and Shelley Moore Capito, who represent important blue-collar constituencies in Wisconsin, Kentucky, and West Virginia; and Mike Rogers, who hails from an economically marginal district in Alabama.

Perhaps the most illuminating example is a freshman Republican from Louisiana named Charles Boustany. Boustany's district boasts a large conservative Catholic population that tilts rightward on social issues. But it has traditionally leaned populist on economic issues; his predecessor, the four-term Democrat Chris John, often voted the protectionist line on trade. On the campaign trail in 2004, Boustany played up his opposition to abortion and gay marriage and to cutting Social Security. Later he laid out four "principles" on the issue: no privatization, no raising the retirement age, no benefit cuts, and no payroll tax increases.

People like Boustany may be only the tip of the iceberg. A 2001 study by the National Committee for an Effective Congress found that, of the 88 congressional districts that Republicans won from Democrats between 1994 and 2000, 59 had incomes below the national average. Among the 46 seats that Democrats won from Republicans, 29 had incomes above the national average. If Republicans move ahead with privatization, we're likely to see Democrats win back a big chunk of the voters who abandoned them in the '90s—the kinds of voters who live in Boustany's district—without losing many of the affluent voters they've picked up. (Marshall's "fainthearted faction"—Democrats sympathetic to privatization—only contains five House members.) Why Bush would want to risk this kind of realignment is beyond me. But, then, hypothetical Republican senators don't get a say in these matters.

NOAM SCHEIBEF

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morally Bankrupt

WE ARE BEGINNING to wonder if the debate over Social Security privatization is a mere GOP diversionary tactic: Get Democrats to commit all their resources to a knockdown drag-out over retirement benefits, then quickly ram through a host of items off the business lobby's wish list. Exhibit A is the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act—the latest name for a bill that Congress has been rejecting since the late '90s—which the Judiciary Committee approved last week and looks set for passage in the coming weeks.

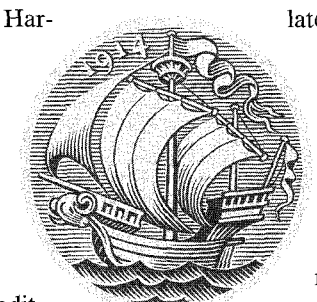
Bankruptcy laws are supposed to balance the interests of creditors with debtors as well as balance society's interest in encouraging people to take risks (such as taking out a loan to start a business) with its interest in ensuring that the risks they take are not foolish ones (such as borrowing money to play the ponies). U.S. bankruptcy laws have generally done a good job of striking this balance and have thus contributed to an economy that is among the most entrepreneurial in the world. What's more, they have codified a progressive and long-standing American value: the belief in second chances.

By these measures, the bankruptcy bill is a catastrophe. Under the current system, bankruptcy courts have broad discretion to decide who can file for Chapter 7, which allows debtors to erase their obligations after forfeiting a state-determined percentage of their remaining assets, and Chapter 13, which requires strict repayment according to court-ordered schedules. Judges base their decisions as much on why the debt was accrued as on income; this way people who come into debt through no fault of their own can get a fresh start, while a judge can decide that a careless gambler must pay what he owes. But the new bill would replace judicial discretion with a means test on household income—those above a certain level would be forced to file for Chapter 13 bankruptcy—dismantling the system's ability to discriminate among worthy and unworthy debtors.

Credit card companies insist that most filers are merely credit addicts who have spent beyond their means and want to stiff the industry with the bill. (Given the credit card industry's marketing strategies—including documented campaigns targeting minors—this complaint is akin to drug dealers whining about their buyers entering rehab.) But a recent Harvard study shows that roughly half of all filers for Chapter 7 do so in the wake of major medical expenses. Moreover, Chapter 7 bankruptcy is hardly a get-out-of-jail-free card—it leaves a prolonged stain on one's credit rating and imposes tough financial sanctions. The credit card companies, by contrast, don't seem to be hurt by the filings much at all. According to Harvard Law School bankruptcy expert Elizabeth Warren, since 1997, "Bankruptcy filings have increased 17 percent, while credit card profits have increased 163 percent."

Meanwhile, the bill does nothing to limit the ability of wealthy debtors to take advantage of the system's numerous loopholes, such as shifting assets into property holdings or trusts. Nor does it deal with the ability of scandal-wracked firms to enter bankruptcy to protect themselves from legal claims, a tactic employed by Enron, WorldCom, and many other companies. This sets up a perverse situation: Not only is it already easy for companies in dire straits because of financial misdeeds to file for bankruptcy, thereby absolving them of requirements to pay their employees' wages and health insurance, but the bill also makes it harder for those employees, were they to be hit by high medical costs, to apply for the same relief.

Which is why it's frustrating to see so many Democrats willing to accept its passage. To be sure, there are a few, such as Chuck Schumer and Ted Kennedy, who have promised to fight the bill on the Senate floor. But three Democrats—Joe Biden, Dianne Feinstein, and Herb Kohl—helped vote the bill out of committee last week, and the upcoming floor debate is looking more and more like a pro forma engagement, with Democrats conceding the battle in order to save their strength for later fights.



This is the wrong strategy. If anything, Democrats should oppose—even filibuster—the bankruptcy bill. Since November, Democrats have been casting about for new ideas to reinvigorate their party, with a growing number agreeing that support for working Americans should be a central tenet in the party's strategy. Meanwhile, Republicans have taken the election as a carte blanche to help their friends in big business, largely at the expense of working Americans. Rather than a fight not worth having, the bankruptcy bill is just the sort of fight the Democrats should relish. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

FRENCH WEAPONS TO THE PRC . . . A.Q. KHAN'S TECHNOLOGY

GAULING

WE CANNOT AVOID THE CONFESsion that seeing our president side by side with the French head of state has generated an unexpected surge of warmth at THE NEW REPUBLIC. It's not really that we're infatuated with George W. Bush—close readers of this magazine may even have detected the occasional lack of gusto for the man (see "Kerry for President," November 1, 2004)—but, somehow, Jacques Chirac leaves us with little choice.

The latest dispute between the two men has been over whether to sell high-tech weaponry to China. Since 1989, both the European Union and the United States have observed an embargo against arms sales to the Middle Kingdom. Bush wants to maintain it. Chirac—well, one can imagine. Presumably, Chirac is under the misimpression that the People's Republic longs for peaceful independence but is constantly undermined by saber-rattling from powerful bullies like Taiwan and Tibet. Under such circumstances, selling modern arms to a potentially unstable nation with a repressive regime makes perfect sense.

Aside from a flash of warm feelings toward our own president, another unexpected by-product of Chirac's game has been an overwhelming feeling of sympathy toward France's neighbors. After all, Chirac did not secretly propose to fellow members of the European Union that they lift the arms embargo. Instead, starting in 1997, he loudly proclaimed his desire to end it, putting other European countries in the position of playing bad cop while they watched France benefit from China's buying power. Now, those countries have wearied, and it looks like EU policy on China is going to go Chirac's way. We would think that Bush protesters might want to channel some of their energies into staging a few demonstrations outside the Elysée Palace, but they're

Jacques Chirac

only human. Most likely, they, too, have been overwhelmed by the smell.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS?

ALL TOO SLOWLY, MORE IS BEING uncovered about the illicit nuclear proliferation network run by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan. Most recently, *Time* magazine reported that Iranian officials met with Khan's associates at least 13 times between 1994 and 1999. Some American officials rightly fear that Khan may also have met with members of Al Qaeda. The true scope of the Khan network remains a mystery, largely because Pakistani leader Pervez Musharraf has refused to allow foreigners to question Khan, who remains a national hero.

Fortunately, the Bush administration has repeatedly assured the public that Khan is out of the proliferation racket. At Oak Ridge National Laboratory in July, Bush stated, "Today, the A. Q. Khan network is out of business. We have ended one of the most dangerous sources of proliferation in the world, and the American people are safer." Bush went even further during the presidential debates last fall, asserting flatly that Khan's network has been "brought to justice."

Now, however, that central question—whether Khan is still involved in nuclear proliferation even after his year under house arrest—appears to be far less resolved. At a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing last week, Chairman Pat Roberts asked CIA Director Porter Goss, "Does the fact that [Khan] is in custody mean the network is shut down?" Goss hardly replied with the same categorical "yes" that his boss has uttered at every opportunity. "We have found that, from a variety of sources following the leads of what we've known already, that we've uncovered many new things, and we have found that, in [covering] those things, that we have not got to the end of the trail," Goss answered. "Getting to the end of that trail is extremely important for us." And rightly so, given the profound threat that a nuclear black market poses to national security. It would have been nice if Bush had been more forthright about how little we really know about Khan's ongoing activities. After the public distortions of WMD intelligence that preceded the Iraq war, we would have thought that the president had learned his lesson. But, as we've discovered time and again, learning is not what this president does best.

HEARING NO EVIL

WHEN BUSH'S HOMELAND SECUrity adviser, Frances Fragos Townsend, attended a much-ballyhooed anti-terrorism conference in Saudi Arabia earlier this month, she liked what she heard. Four days of gentle words and soft promises from such state sponsors of terrorism as Iran and Syria had, apparently, heartened her. "It's really quite extraordinary that religious leaders are

DAVID COWLES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entering this dialogue and offering both wisdom and guidance in regards to [fighting terrorism]," she noted.

But, as it turns out, something in that dialogue may have been lost in translation. According to English transcripts recently released by the Middle East Media Research Institute, during the week leading up to the conference, Saudi television featured a barrage of anti-American and anti-Semitic programming. One Saudi cleric, Aed Al Qarni, used the airwaves to point out that "the first to kill and use terrorism in the world were the Jews." He also helpfully reminded his audience that September 11 was "an American terror attack." Other clerics broadened these constructive sentiments, stating that "Jews and the Christians are Allah's enemies" and should be combated through jihad. And, in a supreme instance of inspiration, conference-goers—including Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan—were treated to a reading of a poem, which explained that Osama bin Laden "was sent by the Jews."

Not long after Townsend returned from Riyadh, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan reported that the president was similarly pleased with the conference and had already passed on his compliments to Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah. We're sure that message got through loud and clear.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

"Party Foul," by Annia Ciezadlo (February 7) misidentified Christoph Wilcke as an analyst for The International Crisis Group. Although he is a former consultant for the organization, he spoke to The New Republic as an independent Middle East analyst, not as a representative of the International Crisis Group.

Because of an editing error, "Tipping Point" by Noam Scheiber (February 14) misstated the year of George W. Bush's first candidacy for president: It was in 2000, not 2001.

We regret the errors. ■

TNR.commentary

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

WITH WHOM TO MAKE PEACE? Fracturing the insurgency is a key aspect of any successful strategy against the (largely) Sunni rejectionists. The insurgency can be said to have three basic components: Baathist revanchists, Salafist jihadis largely from outside of Iraq, and Sunnis fighting to end the occupation. The United Iraqi Alliance has been pretty clear that it won't deal with the Salafists—the likely culprits of last weekend's Ashura murders. But which insurgent factions—if any—the Alliance thinks it can talk with is an open question.

According to a great piece of reporting in *Time*, some "nationalist" Baathists are reaching out to the United States in back-channel discussions:

> Hard-line Islamist fighters like Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda group will not compromise in their campaign to create an Islamic state. But in interviews with TIME, senior Iraqi insurgent commanders said several "nationalist" rebel groups—composed predominantly of ex-military officers and what the Pentagon dubs "former regime elements"—have moved toward a strategy of "fight and negotiate." Although they have no immediate plans to halt attacks on U.S. troops, they say their aim is to establish a political identity that can represent disenfranchised Sunnis and eventually negotiate an end to the U.S. military's offensive in the Sunni triangle. Their model is Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, which ultimately earned the I.R.A. a role in the Northern Ireland peace process. "That's what we're working for, to have a political face appear from the battlefield, to unify the groups, to resist the aggressor and put our views to the people," says a battle commander in the upper tiers of the insurgency who asked to be identified by his nom de guerre, Abu Marwan. Another negotiator, called Abu Mohammed, told TIME, "Despite what has happened, the possibility for negotiation is still open."

But negotiation with whom? The *Time* report makes it clear that a chief concern of their Sunni interlocutors is "the prospect of a government run by exiles who fled to Iran and the West during Saddam's regime," which is to say the Alliance.

Since the election, the Alliance has apparently been calculating that the ball is in its court when it comes to reconciliation. Maybe it's not such a bad calculation. Several Sunni tribal leaders met this weekend to discuss participation in the political process. The Association of Muslim Scholars has been forthright in denouncing the Ashura violence, as well as other attacks on the Shia.

It hasn't even been a month since the election. There isn't a government yet. It may be wise to hold out awhile to find out how many Sunnis can be peeled away from the insurgency free of charge and how many will either have to be enticed diplomatically or confronted militarily. It may also be the case that this contingent of insurgents isn't interested in peace but rather in buying time for an advantageous moment to attack and can't be engaged. But, at some point, the Alliance is going to have to figure out a way to demonstrate the sincerity of its oft-proclaimed position of wanting to invest Sunnis in the new Iraq.

&c.

NOAM SCHEIBER

BACK TO DOMESTIC ISSUES?: A poll in the February 18 *Wall Street Journal* finds that, by a 50 to 27 percent margin, Americans want Congress and the White House to focus on domestic policy rather than foreign policy. Their top three priorities (foreign or domestic) are health care, the deficit, and education.

This sounds like good news for Democrats, which is why I find it so alarming. Or, more precisely, the reason I find it alarming is that it sounds a lot like the polls Democrats were relying on while strategizing for the disastrous 2002 midterm elections and, to some extent, for the presidential campaign last year. (You know the strategy—get foreign policy off the table so you can run on health care.) But, as the GOP has proved in two consecutive election cycles, foreign policy is much larger than any one policy issue. When Americans detect a threat to their security—and a Republican candidate should have no problem helping them do this in 2006 or 2008—they tend to favor a candidate they trust on an emotional level to keep them safe; all other issues are subsidiary. (I've argued that this is the major reason for Bush's reelection.) I worry that Democrats will be as lost as they were these past two election cycles if they run candidates who fail to make that connection and if they don't start making that connection as a party. Unfortunately, the practical effect of polling data like this is to delude them into thinking they don't have to.

TO READ THESE NEW REPUBLIC WEB LOGS DAILY, GO TO TNR.COM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Negroponte v. Rumsfeld.
Inside Job

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN

IT'S A RARE Bush administration appointee that can win the praise of Richard Clarke, the former White House counterterrorism chief who considers most everything President Bush has done in the war on terrorism a catastrophic mistake. But, when Bush tapped John Negroponte last week to become the nation's first director of national intelligence (DNI), Clarke appeared on television to laud "a very good choice."

The confidence in Negroponte—shared by many in the intelligence community—reflects in part a healthy appreciation for his long resumé. The idea behind the DNI position, created at the urging of the 9/11 Commission, is to establish a powerful figure to coordinate efforts across a sprawling and diverse 15-agency intelligence community, thereby preventing some of the bureaucratic failings that allowed September 11 to happen. As a diplomat in Vietnam during the 1970s, Honduras in the 1980s, and Iraq in the past year, Negroponte has decades of experience overseeing complex and secretive wartime operations. "I've been a pretty tough critic of Bush, but a good choice is a good choice," says one retired CIA official. "He's in a fairly rare group of people who've been in operationally hot places."

But much enthusiasm for Negroponte also reflects a more specific hope—namely, that he will stop Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld from taking over the intelligence community and putting the Pentagon in charge of efforts for which it is institutionally ill-suited. As a former senior intelligence official told the *Los Angeles Times*, "If they had picked a political partisan, a known protégé of Vice President Cheney or Rumsfeld, it would have been chilling."

Negroponte is neither a bureaucratic lightweight nor an ideologue. But whether he'll have the institutional resources or the appetite to check Rumsfeld's advances into the intelligence world—especially over human intelligence, a core CIA function—is far from clear. Unveiling Negroponte as his pick for the brand new post at the helm of the intelligence community last week, Bush mentioned that Negroponte "understands the power centers in Washington." But understanding power centers is one thing; shifting them is quite another.

ESTABLISHING WHO CONTROLS human intelligence—that is, the recruitment and maintenance of foreign spies—is likely to be an urgent task for the new DNI. The Pentagon's human intelligence functions have typically been short-term and tactical, such as gathering useful information for commanders preparing to go to battle, while the long-term, strategic work has been the domain of the CIA. But, in the last few years, the Pentagon has dramatically ramped up its human intelligence capabilities. This fall, it began to create spy units within the Defense Intelligence Agency, known as Strategic Support Teams, which will gather information at the behest of military commanders, even in foreign countries where conventional war is unlikely. The new approach is largely the brainchild of top Rumsfeld aide Stephen Cambone, the undersecretary of defense for intelligence, and is intended to end what the secretary once bemoaned as his "near-total dependence on CIA." Under new Defense Department regulations, these teams will be allowed to deploy for up to three days without notifying Langley, which once controlled such spy activities. Rumsfeld aides have insisted, as one told *The New York Times*, that "[the Defense Department] is not looking to go develop strategic intelligence." But some within the intelligence community aren't so sure. They say the Pentagon is developing such a capability—and they raise concerns about how it's going about it. "The experienced [Pentagon] intel operators I've talked to, who've been in sensitive operations in the past, are concerned that Rummy's pushing hard to get people out there who aren't experienced," says a retired intelligence official.

Nor do the Pentagon's encroachments onto the CIA's territory seem likely to stop there. Even control over paramilitary operations—which many in the Defense Department believe should remain with CIA—appears to be an open question. While the 9/11 Commission had recommended that the Defense Department assume the CIA's paramilitary functions outright, a recent study undertaken for the Pentagon rejected the idea, although significant latitude for such operations (like funneling cash and weaponry to proxy forces) has passed over to Special Forces in the last year. As a senior Pentagon official told *The Washington Post*, "We don't have the legal authorities to be doing what the CIA does," which prompted CIA Director Porter Goss to tell the Senate Intelligence Committee last week that "there's not a lot of disagreement on this" between the agency and the Pentagon. But, the very next day, Rumsfeld publicly suggested otherwise, seemingly opening the door to an expanded Pentagon role. "I have not seen the study," he told reporters on Thursday. "We'll have to sit down and talk about it and think it through. . . . We're long on capabilities, and they're long on authorities."

The CIA will not easily cede this or other human intelligence operations, which are central to its reason for being; earlier this month, Goss prepared a plan to bolster CIA human intelligence significantly. Whether he will have Negroponte's backing is unclear. "[Negroponte] may be swayed by whatever his experience, good or bad, with the CIA vis-à-vis the Pentagon has been in Iraq," says a recently departed senior CIA official. That may not be a good sign for the Agency. In late November, the CIA's Baghdad station chief cabled back to Washington that sectarian violence was likely to worsen due to the weakness of the interim Iraqi govern-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment. Negroponte filed a written dissent, arguing that the Falluja military operation against the insurgency had been more effective than the station chief believed. The station chief left Iraq after a yearlong tour; Negroponte reportedly played a behind-the-scenes role in his reassignment.

If Negroponte indeed helped move his top CIA official out of the Green Zone, it would combine two of his career calling cards—loyalty to his administration's position and discretion in carrying out its policies—both of which are cardinal Bush virtues. Negroponte has attracted considerable criticism from human rights groups for abuses that occurred on his watch in both Honduras and now Iraq, but the controversy has never shaken the dedication he showed to either the Reagan or George W. Bush administrations. "He's extremely clever in the way he goes about things," says Morris Busby, a retired diplomat and a longtime Negroponte friend and strong supporter. "He's not a screamer, and he doesn't pound the table." Accordingly, Busby expects that Negroponte's initial strategy as DNI will be to embrace Rumsfeld, not challenge him: "If I read John correctly, he will do his absolute best to work with Rumsfeld and avoid the kind of confrontation others might get into." Negroponte may also have a back channel. According to a former Pentagon official, Negroponte's deputy, Lieutenant General Michael Hayden of the National Security Agency, "has an excellent relationship with Cambone. ... Because Negroponte is going to have Hayden as his deputy, my view is that Defense is not going to be an immediate enemy, and there's not going to be an immediate problem with Pentagon–DNI coordination."

THAT MAY BE bureaucratically wise, since Rumsfeld's allies in the House gelded the DNI's ability to challenge the Pentagon. The law that established the DNI specifies that he may not "abrogate the statutory responsibilities" of the Defense Department. In practice, the language preserves Rumsfeld's significant authority over gigantic Pentagon-based intelligence assets like the National Reconnaissance Office and the National Security Agency—as well as the Defense Human Intelligence Service, which Rumsfeld has been expanding. An earlier version of the bill passed by the Senate allowed "the DNI [to] take billions from the Department of Defense and move it to the FBI or other places," House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter gloated to the *Los Angeles Times*. "We scaled that way back—to $150 million, but not more than five percent of any given program or agency."

While Negroponte's supporters hope that he can overcome these institutional restraints on his power, his rivals surely hope he gets a different message. As Steven Aftergood, an intelligence policy expert at the Federation of American Scientists, puts it, "The fact that he is a transplant, simply being relocated from an existing position, means that no new departure is contemplated." Unfortunately, a departure may be precisely what's needed. ■

The faculty attack on Summers.

Harvard Coup

BY JASON ZENGERLE

HARVARD UNIVERSITY HAS a long tradition of aggrieved students laying siege to its buildings. In 1969, about 100 students protesting the Vietnam War marched through Harvard Yard and took over University Hall. In 2001, some 50 students agitating for a living wage for university workers stormed Massachusetts Hall and occupied it for nearly a month. Whenever there is a serious protest at Harvard, it seems, there's the threat that a building will be overrun by rampaging students. This week, however, that vaunted tradition was given an unusual twist. On a cold and gray Tuesday afternoon, about 500 members of the Harvard faculty politely filed into Lowell Hall, just off Harvard Yard, where they proceeded to lay siege to the university's president, Larry Summers.

In mid-January, Summers, speaking extemporaneously at an economics conference, said that men and women might possess different "intrinsic aptitude[s]" in science. His remarks set off a firestorm of criticism—particularly from some prominent female professors at Harvard—and Summers, after initially hesitating, apologized. More concretely, he appointed two task forces, one on women in the faculty and the other on women in science and engineering, and asked them to make recommendations for improving Harvard's recruitment, support, and promotion of women. But the criticism of Summers did not abate, and, on February 15, at the first monthly faculty meeting since his offending remarks, he was confronted yet again—and this time not only about women in science. One professor assailed Summers for his "reckless and repressive leadership." Another accused him of using "fear and manipulation ... to govern capriciously." Eight more professors rebuked him in similarly harsh terms, and, after the allotted 90 minutes—an experience Summers later described as "searing"—the faculty voted to hold an emergency meeting one week later to continue the discussion and, some hoped, to subject Summers to a "no confidence" vote.

Shortly before the emergency meeting on February 22, a crowd gathered outside Lowell Hall. Most were professors, some of whom had never attended a faculty meeting before, waiting to get into the building as they stood in a line that snaked out the door and down the street. Scores of reporters—including those from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and even the BBC—were there as well. Noticeably missing from this campus scene, however, was much of a student presence. Aside from a few dozen student demonstrators—some holding signs saying LARRY MUST GO!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and DIVEST FROM UNOCAL AND PETROCHINA, others handing out flyers from a group called Students for Larry—most Harvard pupils steered clear of the circus. Surveying the commotion from a distance, a junior classics major named Simon Vozick-Levinson explained students' general lack of interest in Summers's fate. "Most students at Harvard," he said, "don't give a shit about the administration."

Indeed, the Summers controversy is one that has been confined almost entirely to Harvard's faculty. Unlike past protests at Harvard—most of which were, if not student-led, at least student-heavy—the uproar over Summers has been a decidedly older affair. But that doesn't mean it has been any less heated. As Claudia Goldin, a Harvard economics professor, remarked a few days before the emergency meeting, "This may be the first time in American history that most university faculties are more radical than students." Which is why, if Summers is to survive this controversy, it will largely be because less radical members of Harvard's faculty learned how to assert themselves.

IT WAS PROBABLY inevitable that Summers would anger some Harvard faculty members, if only because he was such a dramatic departure from what they were accustomed to. His predecessor, Neil Rudenstine, had been an aggressive fund-raiser. But, in his dealings with professors, he had been extremely hands-off. "Rudenstine was pretty passive," says one senior professor. "And so then all of these guys could just run around and do what they wanted. He gave carte blanche." This carte blanche, Rudenstine's critics contended, contributed to a decline in Harvard's academic standards—courses became less rigorous and grade inflation soared. (In 2001, Rudenstine's last year as president, 91 percent of Harvard students graduated with honors.) By the end of Rudenstine's ten-year tenure, Harvard's status as the preeminent U.S. academic institution no longer seemed assured.

In its search for a new president, then, the seven members of the Harvard Corporation—the university's highest governing body—seemed to be looking for the anti-Rudenstine. In Summers, they found him. A tenured economics professor at Harvard at the age of 28, Summers had left Cambridge in 1991 for a series of policy jobs in Washington, culminating in his appointment as Treasury secretary during the second Clinton administration. With a reputation for being both brilliant and brash, the Corporation clearly hoped that he would shake things up at Harvard. As one corporation member later explained: "We agreed that we needed somebody more aggressive, more pushy, bolder."

As president, the 50-year-old Summers has been all of those things. One of the first tasks he tackled was solving Harvard's terrible space crunch in Cambridge by preparing to expand its campus west of the Charles River onto 260 acres the university had acquired in the Allston section of Boston. Harvard had owned the Allston land for some time, but few of its faculty wanted to decamp there—and Rudenstine had been loath to force them to move to a place they considered as remote as Siberia. At one point, he hired avant-garde architect Rem Koolhaas to devise a plan that called for actually moving the Charles River west, thus making Allston part of Cambridge and seemingly solving the faculty's objection to leaving the 02138 zip code. Summers didn't bother with such schemes. Instead, he pressed the faculty on the issue—and came up with a workable plan that, while still in its early stages, will eventually make Allston home to Harvard's graduate schools of education and public health as well as a state-of-the-art life sciences complex.

Summers also set about changing Harvard's academic culture. He was distressed that so many Harvard undergrads reported little contact with the university's famous faculty, so he expanded a series of freshman seminars, taught by some of Harvard's most renowned professors, and he even led an undergraduate course himself; he then looked to hire more faculty to improve Harvard's professor-to-student ratio. He also began supervising the faculty more closely—most notably confronting Cornel West, the celebrated Afro-American studies professor, about the quality of West's scholarship and reports that West had missed classes

Harvard President Lawrence Summers arrives for a February 22 emergency faculty meeting, at which a threatened no-confidence vote failed to materialize.

STEVEN SENNE/AP PHOTO

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to campaign for Bill Bradley, a confrontation that precipitated West's eventual move to Princeton. "Most presidents think of themselves as having a glorious faculty in fields that maybe they don't understand," says economics professor Goldin. "Larry Summers has been someone who feels that, if he can't understand it, if you can't explain it to him, then he's got to question it. A lot of presidents don't have the time or stomach for that."

Most significantly, Summers instituted a formal review of Harvard's core curriculum—something that hadn't been done since 1978. As Summers saw it, the core—with its emphasis on "approaches to knowledge" rather than on hard information—left many Harvard students woefully ignorant of the sciences. So, last April, a Harvard committee proposed a new curriculum that increased the number of required science courses. As Summers explained, "An educational culture where it's an embarrassment to not know the names of five plays by Shakespeare but OK not to know the difference between a gene and a chromosome isn't functional."

Indeed, in ways large and small, Summers has sought to bring central oversight to a university that, for the longest time, has been almost pathologically decentralized, with its ten schools operating autonomously. "Long before Larry arrived, people would say Harvard should be greater than the sum of its parts," says Henry Rosovsky, a former dean of Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences and a former member of the Harvard Corporation. "But I think Larry has really attempted to address that issue and has been carrying out various policies of achieving greater power for the president's office." Which, perhaps not surprisingly, has not always sat well with the faculty—some of whom complain that Summers is a dictatorial bully who stifles dissent. "For a quote-unquote radical left faculty," says one senior professor, "it's actually very conservative in the amount of personal investment it has in the status quo."

Of course, the faculty's "radical left" nature is another reason for Summers's current troubles. While Rudenstine rarely uttered a word about political matters, Summers has exhibited no such temerity. Officially sworn in as Harvard president only a month after the September 11 terrorist attacks, he has used his pulpit to preach a patriotic message. "It is all too common for us to underestimate the importance of clearly expressing our respect and support for the military and individuals who choose to serve in the Armed Forces of the United States," he said in an October 2001 speech at Harvard's Kennedy School. Not long after, he reversed a 1960s–era policy that prohibited Harvard students from listing ROTC service in the yearbook. And, at the first Harvard commencement over which Summers presided, he requested that "The Star-Spangled Banner" be played to start the proceedings; the ceremony had traditionally begun with Harvard-themed music. Moreover, Summers has not limited his ideological pronouncements to just patriotic issues. In September 2002, in the midst of a faculty and student campaign to pressure Harvard to divest its portfolio of companies that do business in Israel, Summers, who is Jewish, declared that "serious and thoughtful people are advocating and taking actions that are anti-Semitic in their effect, if not their intent."

All of these stands—along with his dressing down of West—have made Summers a hero to cultural conservatives. But Summers himself is not a conservative. (After all, he was once a policy adviser to Michael Dukakis and then served for eight years in the Clinton administration.) Rather, he is, as James Traub called him in *The New York Times Magazine*, an "unabashedly mainstream figure." On a campus that is decidedly to the left of the mainstream, however, this can be a source of much consternation. And while, in the current controversy, Summers's critics confine most of their complaints to his remarks on women and the sciences and his leadership style more generally, it's often not hard to detect the political subtext of their grievances. In a speech at the February 15 faculty meeting, for instance, Political Science Professor Theda Skocpol, one of Summers's most vociferous opponents, accused him of harming the university "in effect, if not in intent"—a not-too-subtle rebuke of Summers's pro-Israel comments.

The dispute's ideological nature has put Summers at a decided disadvantage. His leading faculty critics, like Skocpol and History of Science Professor Everett Mendelsohn, have long records of campus activism and are experts at the art of academic warfare. "These were the same people who were agitating in the 1970s for various reforms," says Steve Pinker, who was a Harvard graduate student at the time and is now a psychology professor and one of Summers's most outspoken backers. "They're very familiar with speechmaking and petition-signing and verbal manifestos." Indeed, Summers's faculty supporters concede that they were completely unprepared for the February 15 faculty meeting, at which only one of the eleven speakers defended the president. Many of his supporters, says Pinker, "are scientists who have an allergy to any kind of activism or verbal politics . . . Who don't often go to faculty meetings. They just want to be left alone in the lab."

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE February 15 meeting, as both sides prepared for the emergency session the following week, Summers's supporters tried to overcome that mentality. Claudia Goldin and another economics professor, David Laibson, drafted a letter that, while acknowledging that Summers had made mistakes and must work on becoming more collegial, argued in favor of his staying on as president. They then sought counsel from, as Goldin described them, the "angels of Harvard"—revered Cambridge figures including Rosovsky and University Librarian Sidney Verba—and, after a few modifications, circulated the document, eventually garnering close to 200 signatures. Other Summers allies quietly lobbied colleagues on his behalf. On the eve of the emergency meeting, *The Crimson* released a poll of 280 members of the faculty: 32 percent thought Summers should resign; 55 percent thought he should not.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That split in opinion seemed to be reflected at the February 22 emergency meeting, where, unlike the meeting a week earlier, Summers's faculty supporters managed to make their voices heard. According to *The Crimson*, which is the only media outlet permitted to attend Harvard faculty meetings, a natural sciences professor credited Summers for bringing "energy and intelligence" to Harvard. Several other professors made similarly supportive remarks. The tone of this meeting was far more collegial than the last one. And, perhaps most important for Summers, there was no motion for a vote of no confidence. But the criticism was still there. A history professor complained about how Summers had centralized power, destroying Harvard's "self-governing community." And a physics professor became the first faculty member to openly call for Summers's resignation. Summers, once again, tried to appease his critics. He pledged "to listen more—and more carefully—and to temper my words and actions in ways that convey respect and help us work together more harmoniously." He was committed, he said, "to opening a new chapter" in his work with the faculty. But some on the faculty still seemed interested only in a final chapter: An African and African American studies professor later told *The Crimson* that he intended to move for a vote of "no confidence" in Summers at the next faculty meeting in March.

After two hours, the meeting was over, and the faculty came out into the frigid night. The few students who had gathered outside Lowell Hall earlier that day were long gone, but the media hordes remained, and they shined klieg lights and shoved microphones toward the professors' faces, bombarding them with questions about what had happened inside. The professors, unaccustomed to giving sound bites, tried nonetheless, pronouncing the meeting "productive" and "constructive" and "stately." As they answered the queries, Summers himself came out of the building; but, rather than walk through the media gauntlet, he took an alternative route around the side of Lowell Hall. Nonetheless, some reporters spotted him and quickly chased him down. As Summers walked, they formed a moving scrum around him. What did he think of what had just transpired? Did he plan to resign? Summers, still walking, would only say that he found the meeting "constructive" and "productive." Before he had to say any more, he rushed into another building—and, for a moment at least, he got away from the questions and out of the cold. ■

Agree?
Disagree?
Got something to add?
Write The New Republic's editors at letters@tnr.com

Jerusalem Dispatch

In Withdrawal

BY YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

MAJOR GENERAL Elazar Stern paces before several hundred cadets at the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) combat officers' training school and strokes his knitted skullcap. Stern, commander of the IDF's personnel branch, is one of the army's highest-ranking officers.

And yet his demeanor and appearance are casual. He avoids the microphone at the podium on stage and instead stands at ground level facing the cadets, whose various colored berets identify them as paratroopers, artillerymen, and combat engineers. Avoiding military formality, they ask Stern about the moral dilemmas of fighting the war on terrorism and about how to increase the motivation of young Israelis to serve. So far, though, no one has dared ask the question that is on everyone's mind: How will the army deal with the possibility that large numbers of right-wing religious soldiers will refuse to carry out next summer's planned withdrawal from Gaza? Stern looks around the auditorium—where at least one-quarter of the young men are wearing the knitted skullcaps of religious Zionism—and says, with a broad smile, "Doesn't anyone have questions about the issue we haven't discussed?"

The reticence is understandable. No one here, especially a religious soldier, wants to be identified as a potential conscientious objector. The army has made clear that refusal to participate in the Gaza withdrawal will be treated as insubordination; just recently, a candidate for officers' school was rejected after declaring he would refuse to evacuate settlements.

Finally, a soldier whose purple skullcap matches the infantry beret tucked in his epaulet approaches an open microphone. "What does the army think about the withdrawal?" he asks.

"The army doesn't think its position is relevant," Stern says.

"Even about the security aspects of withdrawal?"

"Even about the security aspects. The army made its opinion known about withdrawal from Lebanon until the democratic government decided to withdraw [in May 2000]. Once a decision is made, the army will do everything—*everything*—to fulfill the government's policy. I know soldiers who have defended settlements they don't believe should exist. It's not easier to die for a settlement you don't believe should be there than it is to evacuate it."

A secular soldier notes that, for the left, the army isn't moral enough, while for the right, it's no longer Zionist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enough. "Is Israeli society still behind us?" he asks.

"In this room are all the contradictions of Israeli society," Stern replies. "Secular and religious, new immigrants and veterans, Bedouins and Jews. The army is the meeting point of clashing values. Your dilemma at a roadblock [in the territories] is between respect for the value of human dignity and the value of protecting lives from terrorists. The withdrawal also presents us with conflicting values. But there's no such thing as one army that defends synagogues and another that defends discotheques; one army that eats kosher and one that doesn't; one that protects settlements and one that evacuates settlements. We've been in that story before. How long did [ancient] Jewish sovereignty last? Each camp then thought that its position was right. The result was two thousand years of exile."

The threat of massive conscientious objection on the right is the worst internal crisis the IDF has faced since the early years of the state, when then–Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion crushed two ideological militias, sinking the right-wing Irgun armaments ship, the *Altalena*, and disbanding the Marxist combat unit, the Palmach. The organized refusals could complicate the Gaza withdrawal, a difficult operation that the army estimates will take about two months to complete. Worse, massive refusal would destroy the army's role as Israel's last unifying institution, perhaps provoking counter-refusals on the left to defend settlements. And, if thousands of religious soldiers do carry out their refusal pledge, the result will not only be catastrophic for the army, but for religious Zionism. The refusal issue is the cruelest dilemma the religious Zionist movement has ever faced, pitting the community's two main achievements of this generation—building settlements and assuming leadership roles in the army—against each other.

FOR ALL THE media hype in recent years about left-wing conscientious objection, like the letter from reservist pilots opposing targeted killings of terrorists, no more than 500 left-wing soldiers have refused to serve in the territories during the current war. By contrast, 20 times that number of recruits and reservists have signed a petition declaring their intention to refuse to carry out orders to evacuate settlements. And a parallel petition is circulating among religious twelfth-graders about to be drafted.

Ironically, the current refusal movement is coming from the sector of Israeli society most passionate about military service. An estimated 30 percent of combat officers and soldiers are now religious Zionists—twice their percentage in the general population. Indeed, in the last year, three Orthodox Jews, including Stern, have joined the IDF's general staff, until recently entirely secular. On a Shabbat morning at Training School One, as officers' cadet school is known, the synagogue is so crowded that many soldiers must pray outside. Like kibbutzniks a generation ago, religious recruits have become the group most ideologically committed to serving; their motivation has helped the army win the war against terrorism.

At a recent anti-withdrawal rally of Israeli youth from the West Bank and Gaza, thousands gathered in a park across from the Knesset, holding banners imprinted with the names of their settlements. Booths sold knitted skullcaps and game boards about the land of Israel; a band played rock music with liturgical lyrics. When I asked a group of twelfth-graders about to be drafted what they intended to do in the army, the unanimous response was, to join "the best combat unit I can get into." Only one teenager said that, if the withdrawal happens, "this won't be my army anymore." And, in numerous conversations with combat soldiers at the rally, most said they wouldn't risk jeopardizing their military careers by refusing outright to follow orders; instead, they intend to ask to be reassigned to nonconfrontational roles, like supplying water for other soldiers.

That, in fact, is what happened the last time the army evacuated settlements, in Sinai in 1982. Soldiers who asked to be reassigned were given minor supporting jobs. Over the years, some commanders have allowed left-wing soldiers who opposed serving in the territories to do the same. In Gaza, though, the number of soldiers likely to request exemptions will be so large that the army won't be able to comply. So far, the IDF has granted exemptions only to soldiers who live in settlements slated for removal, though the policy may be extended to soldiers who live in any settlement.

The army may be reaching the limits of its flexibility. "We're considering several steps that will make people understand the seriousness of refusal," a senior military source says. The first step could be a confrontation with *hesder*, the unit that combines army service with yeshiva study. Rabbinic heads of five *hesder* yeshivas—out of some 40 *hesder* programs, with a total of 3,000 students—have endorsed the call of the most senior *hesder* spiritual leader, former Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapira, to disobey withdrawal orders. Most *hesder* heads have remained silent, and that has been understood in the religious community as tacit opposition to Shapira. According to the military source, those *hesder* yeshivas promoting refusal will be shut down even before the Gaza evacuation begins as a warning to potential refusers. The army recently canceled the right of *hesder* students to serve in separate units, though for now, they will still be permitted to spend most of their service in yeshiva study. Stern, who has long advocated disbanding separate *hesder* units, insists the move has nothing to do with the Gaza withdrawal, but few within the religious Zionist community are convinced.

IF SOLDIERS' REFUSALS to participate in the Gaza withdrawal endanger the cohesiveness of the IDF, they also threaten to undo many of the gains made by Israel's religious Zionists in the past decade. In recent years, the religious Zionist community has been split between cultural moderates, who participate in secular culture and have even produced a religious feminist movement, and conservatives, who mimic the stringent observance and separatism of the ultra-Orthodox. Though the moderates are a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

majority, massive refusals would pull the community closer to self-ghettoization. Indeed, voices calling on religious Zionists to separate from a supposedly hedonistic Israel that is betraying its pioneering roots are growing. And some are even invoking the rhetoric of the most extreme ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists—challenging the basic premise of religious Zionism, which sanctifies the Jewish state as the harbinger of the messianic era. A recent op-ed by Professors Arieh Zaritsky and Nissim Amzallag in *Hatzofeh*, the religious Zionist daily, called for "unilateral withdrawal from the state of Israel, including surrender of our Israeli citizenship." One leaflet circulating among settlers adds, "Their flag isn't our flag. ... [The Zionist state] is a rebellion against God, a war against the Torah, the land of Israel, and the people of Israel."

Moderates who place a higher religious value on Jewish unity than on maintaining a Jewish presence in all the territory of biblical Israel are fighting back, circulating petitions among religious soldiers affirming their intention to fulfill orders. One leading opponent of withdrawal, former General Yaakov Amidror, wrote an op-ed in *Maariv* comparing refusers to the ancient Zealots who, during the Roman siege of Jerusalem, burned the granaries of rival factions in the starving city.

Within the army, discussions like Stern's meeting with the cadets are becoming routine. And religious officers are taking the lead in explaining to their men why the government must be obeyed. Indeed, secularists who have worried that the "penetration" of religious Zionists into the officer corps will politicize the army got it backward: Religious officers, committed to the IDF and to preserving their own positions, may well be the army's best guarantee of unity in the ranks.

Still, even many cultural moderates may be unable to carry out orders—not for religious or even political reasons but because they will refuse to drag fellow Israelis out of their homes. Most religious Zionists believe that withdrawal, while technically legal, is democratically illegitimate: Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, after all, won the last election on a platform opposing unilateral withdrawal and then lost a Likud referendum on the issue. At settler demonstrations, "dictator" is the most popular pejorative on anti-Sharon posters. Religious Zionist leader Effie Eitam, a former commander of Israeli forces in southern Lebanon who does not see refusal as an existential threat, nevertheless warns that poor morale among soldiers will thwart the army's ability to carry out the withdrawal. "It is the duty of officers to tell their superiors that the lack of an esprit de corps is as fatal to fulfilling this mission as it would be to go to war with defective guns," he says.

Stern, for his part, is convinced that most religious soldiers will fulfill the order to uproot settlements. "It's hard? I know: My son studied in Atzmona [a Gaza settlement]. Now he may have to evacuate the homes of people he knows, maybe his rabbi. It hurts? I hope it will. Even for those who want to dismantle settlements. We hope we'll have many soldiers crying. Crying but evacuating." ■

A capitalist cure for poverty.

Poor Idea

BY G. PASCAL ZACHARY

In 1996, I stumbled across a curious experiment in global capitalism in the jungles of Borneo. On the Malaysian side of the island, in a beautiful river city called Kuching, a U.S. company was building Borneo's second electronics factory. I remember standing uneasily in the mud and muck of a construction site that had been carved out of a rain forest near Kuching's small airport. In the heat of the day, wearing a hard hat, a perspiring executive from Middle America named Bob Snyder began excitedly telling me about his "experiment."

Snyder worried that Kuching, with only about 300,000 people, was too small to supply him with all the workers he would ultimately need. Relying only on city folks, he feared that he would soon exhaust the local labor supply and that wages would rise. His solution was to devise a test: Take a man out of the jungle and turn him into a reliable worker. If he succeeded, Snyder wagered, he would never face a shortage of labor.

Snyder then revealed that he had recently hired such a man, a subsistence tree-cutter and rice planter who hailed from a village a few hours away. The man's name was Donald Jagau. He was 28 years old, a husband, a father, and a member of a Dayak tribe native to Borneo's dense forests. His village lacked electricity and could be reached only by riverboat. With a reasonable command of English and a sharp mind, Jagau was proving a worthy pupil—so worthy that Snyder had sent him to California to train (for nearly a year) in Silicon Valley. Jagau would soon return to Kuching to be among the first workers in Snyder's new factory.

Once back in Kuching, Jagau thrived. Over time, he rose from simply tending a machine to training other new arrivals from the jungle. His salary grew to nearly $500 per month, which gave him and his family a higher income than 50 percent of Malaysian households. The company sent him to Scotland for further training on the latest machinery. Jagau even had health insurance and enough disposable income to purchase a motorcycle.

Documenting Jagau's transformation from impoverished forest dweller to upwardly mobile high-tech worker became a side project for me. Over the next few years, during trips to Southeast Asia, I visited him several times, writing about him in *The Wall Street Journal*, for which I was a foreign correspondent, and also in a book I wrote about

G. Pascal Zachary is the author, most recently, of THE DIVERSITY ADVANTAGE: MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE NEW WORLD ECONOMY *(Westview, 2003).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

globalization. As I charted Jagau's ascent, I marveled at the "invisible hand" of capitalism. In the pursuit of his selfish interests, an American executive had transformed the material circumstances of Jagau's life. Deep in the jungle, a would-be Colonel Kurtz was disciplined by market forces. Charity was alien to Snyder's mentality, and he could be accused of exploiting Jagau, who, in time, came to resent the relentless monotony of the factory and his absence from the tranquil forests he so enjoyed. Yet Snyder had done more for Jagau than any philanthropist could. Just ask Jagau's brother, Jonathon, who remained an impoverished tree-cutter. Despite his misgivings about being rushed into modern life, Donald Jagau would never choose his brother's life, with its grinding insecurity and deprivation. And it is easy to understand why. The last time I saw Jonathon, he was firing a .22-caliber rifle at the faint outlines of a small animal. Hungry, he hunted not for sport. And that night he missed.

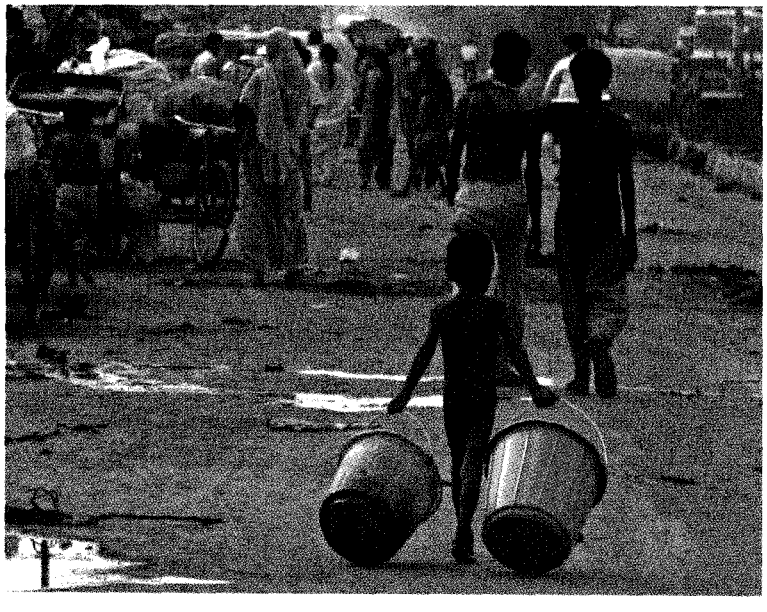
THE TALE OF Donald Jagau would surely warm the heart of C.K. Prahalad, a business consultant and management expert. Born and raised in India, Prahalad, who teaches business at the University of Michigan, is a leading thinker in a movement of wealthy, successful capitalists who now suffer from guilty consciences. About the time Jagau was chopping down a tree and hearing an ad on his portable radio for a job in a high-tech factory, Prahalad was asking himself, "What are we doing about the poorest people around the world?"

Helping the world's poor is not standard fare for business, but Prahalad wants to change that. He wants to bring serious discussions of poverty out of the Ford Foundation and the World Bank and into the corporate boardroom. He offers an immodest proposal: not to alleviate poverty, or reduce it, which is the goal of development experts. Nope. That's too low a bar for Prahalad, who has the over-the-top confidence that comes from selling his ideas to senior management. (He is, according to *BusinessWeek Online*, "one of Corporate America's top management gurus.") Instead, Prahalad talks unabashedly of "eradicating" poverty, as if the global poor were a neglected market to be reevaluated, readdressed, and, ultimately, conquered with a re-branded product.

How? Sweeping aside decades of experience and a mountain of literature with a few caricatures, Prahalad presents his own, very simple, solution to poverty: Give the poor decent products at affordable prices. In short, treat the poor as consumers. Companies who do, he argues, will find "the fortune at the bottom of the pyramid." The phrase, which is the title of Prahalad's latest book, refers to the world's wealth pyramid. Out of six billion people, one third are relatively wealthy and one third are absolutely poor, living on a $1 per day or less. Prahalad says these people, plus two billion more who live on between $1 and $2 per day, make up the "bottom of the pyramid," or BOP for short.

Prahalad argues that multinational corporations should pursue the poor because they are "a growth opportunity." In treating the poor as a new market, Prahalad contrasts his own BOP approach with that of the older and better-known corporate social-responsibility (CSR) movement. CSR argues that companies have a moral obligation to do good. But, in Prahalad's view, CSR is ultimately about handouts, while BOP is about building profitable businesses that happen to serve the poor. He insists, "If we stop thinking of the poor as victims or as a burden and start recognizing them as resilient and creative entrepreneurs and value-conscious consumers, a whole new world of opportunity will open up." By catering to the poor, Prahalad sees the chance for multinational corporations—ever seeking fresh customers—to build profitable businesses in unlikely places.

C.K. Prahalad thinks that, by turning the world's poor—such as these inhabitants of an Indian slum—into consumers, multinational corporations can both improve profits and eliminate poverty.



DESMOND BOYLAN/REUTERS/LANDOV

If you haven't heard of Prahalad or his ideas, you haven't been hanging out with the folks who attend the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, or hobnobbing with Bill Gates or Ted Turner, billionaires who are trying to save the world, or at least a bit of it. For multinational corporations that have tried just about every scheme to put a human face on markets, Prahalad's belief that doing well and doing good go hand in hand is a welcome tonic. *The New Yorker*'s James Surowiecki and *Fortune*'s David Kirkpatrick warmly recommend his ideas, and *The Economist* predicts that Prahalad's book "seems destined to be read not just in boardrooms but also in government offices." Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says of Prahalad, "If you are looking for fresh thinking about emerging markets, your search is ended." Gates praises Prahalad for providing "a blueprint for fighting poverty."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Prahalad has the ear of Kofi Annan and served recently on a U.N. Development Program (UNDP) commission on "the private sector and development." And, in mid-December, Prahalad convened a meeting in San Francisco of his fellow travelers in the BOP movement, including the CEOs of Hewlett-Packard, Visa, and Vodaphone. He was joined by emissaries from such global poverty–fighters as the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the UNDP. And Prahalad's "eradicating poverty" confab was funded by, among others, Shell, Microsoft, ChevronTexaco, Dupont, the Inter-American Development Bank, and investment bank ABN Amro.

PRAHALAD'S THEORY THAT doing well jibes with doing good may seem like pabulum, but its popularity among corporate leaders and luminaries of globalism is worth pondering. In the past, the world's largest corporations have often acted as if profit-seeking and ethics are in conflict. So, in one respect, Prahalad deserves credit for exhorting the biggest businesses to try harder to square moral and financial imperatives and to begin by crafting new strategies and tactics to liberate the poor from what he calls the "poverty penalty." Traditionally, businesses that specialized in the poor also specialized in gouging them, extorting extra-high profits as a "reward" for going through the trouble of dealing with them in the first place. In the United States, we have laws to counteract the practice. In many poor countries, however, gouging the poor is the norm, so even basic goods (bags of rice, matches, a container of cooking oil) are sold at inflated prices. Smartly, Prahalad argues that multinational corporations have abetted this sorry state of affairs by limiting themselves to the pursuit of wealthier customers in poor countries on the theory that consumers with more money to spend are likelier to buy their products. Instead, he says, big business should design products for the poor from scratch so that reasonable profits can be earned even on lower prices.

But why would multinational corporations go to the trouble of, say, catering to the hygiene or communication needs of the poor in Cambodia, if not to burnish their moral images? Profits and growth is Prahalad's answer. Taken collectively, the "purchasing power" of even the poorest segments of poor countries is substantial. There is money to be made from the poor, he argues, and someday, the poor may be richer and they will move upmarket (to more expensive goods and services) with the brands they know.

PRAHALAD'S ARGUMENT SOUNDS convincing until you realize that providing goods and services to the poor, fairly and effectively, is difficult for private corporations. He insists that "large-scale and widespread entrepreneurship is at the heart of the solution to poverty," yet he offers few examples, and his favorites are presented over and over again: in India, a prosthetic foot manufacturer, an eye clinic, and a single-package shampoo from the Indian arm of Unilever, the global consumer products company. He is high on a Brazilian department store, Casas Bahia, which sells in Rio's *favelas* mainly to self-employed service workers. He applauds the Mexican cement giant Cemex for helping the poor build homes through careful purchases of cement. He sings the praises of microfinance, invoking the well-worn example of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank and its thousands of spin-offs. He favors new technologies, citing the rapid growth of mobile phones in poor countries, and extols the virtues of telecenters, which, in many parts of the world, have given the poor cutting-edge communications tools for the first time in history.

But there are two sets of problems with Prahalad's examples. First, so long as the poor spend what little money they have, they will remain poor, even if they now benefit from higher-quality goods. Prahalad glides over this critical point. In fact, the poor can still be poor even if they pay less for certain essential goods. How? To start with, they can be persuaded (by those aggressive corporations suddenly paying attention to them in pursuit of profit) to purchase things they did not formerly need. Prahalad, for instance, repeatedly celebrates the success of Avon in selling cosmetics in the heart of the Amazon without asking who benefits, really, from those purchases.

Prahalad's blasé attitude toward the effects of marketing on poor people is willful blindness. He ought to know better. Members of the middle class are not alone in trying to live beyond their means. Poor people try, too. And they can be ensnared even by well-intended marketing campaigns. I am reminded of a Frito-Lay push I witnessed in the mid-'90s in Bangkok. Potato chips were alien to the Thai diet, dominated by fruit- and rice-based snacks. Unhappy with locally grown potatoes, Frito-Lay trained Thai farmers to grow better quality ones. Assured of this supply, the company blitzed the snack market, even trumpeting the "nutritional" value of its chips on its packaging. The nutritional labeling gave a healthy impression and was successfully used by Frito-Lay to cut into the sales of countless roadside snack peddlers. But even the best-packaged snack foods are a poor substitute for plentiful local fruits and rice dishes, usually available at a fraction of the price. In short, a taste for packaged potato chips are making Thai people fatter and less healthy—and cannot possibly help the budget of any poor person buying them. Such a clear contradiction—how better services to the poor can nevertheless ravage their daily budget—seems lost on Prahalad.

Then there is the problem that Prahalad's favorite examples—say, the low-cost prosthetic foot and the bargain eye surgery—are priced too high for the genuinely poor to afford. What's more, multinational corporations, despite Prahalad's exhortations, aren't well-positioned to serve the poor. In India, for instance, domestic companies, not multinationals, are most attuned to impoverished consumers. Consider the push by Tata, one of India's largest domestic carmakers, to build an auto for the masses. The company's goal: a new car priced at $2,200 that will appeal to the five million Indians who own motorbikes but can't afford a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

standard car. Tata plans to sell both ready-to-drive and kit versions of the car. The kit version, the company thinks, could spawn a cottage industry of small auto assemblers around the country. No multinational carmaker has a business model that can be easily adapted to match Tata's bold goal of a people's car. The same is true in such diverse fields as pharmaceuticals, where India's leading companies are far ahead in making drugs for the poor, and in water pumps, where the most reliable and least costly devices are Indian-designed and -made. That India's leading companies concentrate on the poor shows the benefits of restraining, not unleashing, multinationals. It was India's protectionist trade rules, maligned for decades, that gave its domestic companies the living space out of which today's innovations flow.

THE MOST SERIOUS shortcoming of Prahalad's feel-good message is that it ignores the experience of the poorest part of the world: sub-Saharan Africa. China and India, where Prahalad is most excited about the promise of a BOP strategy, have seen dramatic reductions in poverty over the past 20 years. What's more, these achievements were not the result of the private sector pursuing profits from the poor. In fact, multinational corporations have spent billions pursuing Chinese consumers over the past decade, and almost none of them have any profits to show for it. Instead, with the help of big government, China has exported its way out of poverty, becoming the workshop for the world. India has grown in a more complex fashion, through a sharper focus on its domestic market. But Africa is poorer today than in 1990. This striking trend sets the continent apart from the rest of the world. In the '90s, the percentage of people living on $1 per day in East Asia fall by half, from about 30 to 15 percent. South Asia (chiefly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) saw rates fall from the low forties to the low thirties. Only in sub-Saharan Africa, where poverty rates were already the highest in the world, have they grown higher still, now approaching 50 percent.

Africa arguably needs a BOP strategy more than anywhere else in the world, yet Prahalad has virtually nothing to say about the region. He offers no formal case studies—or even extended examples—of BOP successes in Africa. (The index to his book, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid*, contains no entries on Africa, or even individual African countries; a single entry, for an obscure food enterprise in Nigeria, is the lone reference.) Prahalad's neglect of Africa betrays the big lie at the heart of his argument: that business, pursuing profits, can provide the essentials of a good life to the poorest members of society; that the goods and services we hope even the poor can possess—things like clean water, decent schools, basic electricity, public safety—can be delivered at a profit, and by a private business.

Prahalad says the BOP model can vastly improve public services for the poor, and one consequence of his ideas is to underscore the importance of privatizing failing public enterprises. Indeed, the capacity of private corporations to deliver services once viewed as the sole purview of government is central to the BOP movement. To be sure, public services for profit work in some places—and they would work in Africa, too, if there were profits to be made. But there are not. Privatization is a bust in Africa, and not always because Africans have made it difficult for private actors. Consider a brief example of a best-case scenario: the capital city of Accra, Ghana, where, for the past few years, an honest government in a peaceful country has tried to attract foreign capitalists to invest in its creaky water system. The plan, which received the blessing of the World Bank, was well-conceived. To entice investors, the government raised water rates in advance of improvements in the water system—in the hope that higher revenue would entice a foreign savior to plunk down cash to pay for much-needed improvements in service. (Most of Ghana's poor city-dwellers have no piped water, and even those who do are subject to frequent outages.) Of course, this all sounds like a great bottom-of-the-pyramid opportunity, except for one problem: No foreigners, or even locals, offered to invest in water delivery. Not one of the world's three major water companies was interested in putting money into Ghana. No local entrepreneurs wanted to either. And they didn't for a good reason. There's no profit in it. The truth is that extracting money from poor Africans in exchange for water isn't a business at all. It's a public service.

THE BEST SOLUTION to poverty is, of course, the creation of good jobs—of the sort that changed the life of my Malaysian friend Donald Jagau. And, to be sure, good jobs are of little value if no markets exist to serve these newly enriched consumers. But Prahalad turns this traditional model—first jobs and then markets—on its head. Instead, he argues for elevating the weakest consumers—insisting that the most powerful capitalists ought to take them as seriously as the wealthiest people of the world. In doing so, he presents a seductive alternative reading of the multinational corporation—as an agent of transformation and empowerment, not a force for exploitation and the concentration of wealth. It's no wonder he has inspired the allegiance of the world's CEOs.

But can selling to the poor help alleviate poverty? And can multinational corporations really profit from the impoverished while at same time delivering goods and services the poor value? In a *Harvard Business Review* article two years ago, which was the seed for his new book, Prahalad conceded that "big companies are not going to solve the economic ills of developing countries by themselves. ... But it's clear to us that prosperity can come to the poorest regions only through the direct and sustained involvement of multinational companies." But Prahalad's confidence in big corporations is not justified by their performance thus far. His curious experiment, still in its infancy, may yet prove his faith in the "fortune at the bottom of the pyramid." But, more likely, it will show that he traded in false hopes. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Earth and Heaven

FILM WAS NOT INVENTED TO complement geography, yet it has had that function from the beginning. The earliest newsreels and travelogues took the viewer in Des Moines to Dakar. But that was only vicarious tourism. Fiction films, in the hands of good artists, have brought us more than simulated travel. Many of those artists, usually natives of other places, want us to see the innate qualities of their countrymen, their similarities to other peoples and their differences.

TURTLES CAN FLY
(IFC Films)

MY MOTHER'S SMILE
(Istituto Luce)

One of the latest to take up this work is Bahman Ghobadi. He is a Kurd, therefore one of a people who are, in a sense, stateless, because they live in so many Middle Eastern states. Their nation, Kurdistan, is apparently an entity to Kurds, if not always to the five countries across which it stretches. Ghobadi was born in Iranian Kurdistan and had his film education in Tehran, where, along with other experience, he was an assistant for a time to Abbas Kiarostami. Ghobadi has now made his third feature about Kurds.

The first, *A Time for Drunken Horses*, dealt—a bit heavily—with the troubles of some Kurdish young people in getting medical help for their brother. I missed Ghobadi's second picture. The third, **TURTLES CAN FLY**, is masterly: it courses before us with grace, a control that paradoxically bespeaks love and anger. The terrain is northern Iraq near the Turkish border. The time is a few weeks before the American invasion in 2003. The specific place is a refugee village of tents, in the midst of a brown landscape littered with ruins of houses. (The ruins are not identified. Are they leftovers from the Iran-Iraq war?)

The three leading characters are in their middle teens: a smart operator nicknamed Satellite, a youth called Hangao who lost both his arms in a mine explosion, and Hangao's sister, Agrin, gentle, resigned to gray existence. The story has two main elements: Satellite's efforts actually to get a satellite aerial for the community's television set and his interest in Agrin. Also in the center is a small boy, whom the armless Hangao carries—with the boy's arms around his neck.

The chief income of these youngsters and others is from the excavation of mines in the fields all around them, which they then sell to a dealer. Accidents inevitably happen, as the armless boy attests. Throughout the mines are called "American"; this, the director has said, is because Americans (and others) sold them to Saddam Hussein (and others), "who swamped the country with them." Yet the Kurds are awaiting the American invasion eagerly, as a possible aid to their condition. One of the reasons they want their television to work is so that they can keep up with events. They seem to be pleased when American troops do arrive.

The film's texture is composed of grim details, but Ghobadi embraces a range of feelings—proud, amorous, terrible, sometimes funny—that swirl through the youngsters' lives. Ghobadi has an eye for intimacy—the affection, the feeding, the spats—and for vista. At times huge swarms of villagers, at times only the children, flow over the hills in vast panoramic breadth.

Here again is a director who works wonders with children. All of them, we are told, are non-actors. The most disturbing yet admirable instance is the armless boy, Hiresh Feysal Rahman (no question of fakery here: we see the stumps), who is flawlessly intense. Avaz Latif is resignedly distraught as his sister. Soran Ebrahim has all the flash and wit and energy, together with tacit depth, that Satellite needs.

The dialogue is, we can conclude, mostly in Kurdish, with touches of Arabic and occasional dabs of English—possibly picked up from television. The title is unexplained; one reference to turtles doesn't help. The cinematography by Shahriar Assadi is acutely placed in the spectrum. The effect is of black and white, with occasional hints of color—for instance, dim red stripes on Satellite's shirt. It is as if we lived in the grainy present, occasionally touched by a glimpse of a different past and future.

In any case, Kurdistan is no longer merely a name on a map. When it *is* on a map.

Marco Bellocchio is a survivor. Born in 1939, he was in the youngest contingent of the postwar Italian film benison. Most of his older and coeval colleagues are gone, but he soldiers on, with his own version of the quintessence in those Italian directors, a belief that the making of serious film was a prime reason for the creation of the human race.

Bellocchio's first pictures, beginning in 1966, were overtly or less overtly Marxist, anti-bourgeois (a bourgeois family was often the center of the picture), decidedly skeptical about the Church. Sometimes there was a mentally unbalanced character, almost as if such imbalance was one of the fruits of contemporary culture.

Bellocchio's latest film continues some of those themes. **MY MOTHER'S SMILE** (part of a longer title: this is the part used in the United States) is about Ernesto, a Roman painter in his thirties, quite successful, separated from his wife and young son. He duels with the former, adores the latter. His home and studio are markedly Roman—utilitarian furnishings in what look like rooms in an ornate palazzo. To his home one day comes a cleric from the Vatican to tell him that his mother, long dead, is being considered for canonization. She was murdered by one of Ernesto's brothers—a deranged man, now in an institution. The grounds for possible sainthood are, more than her stainless life, her help to a man who badly needed it and the possibility that while her mad son was killing her, she forgave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

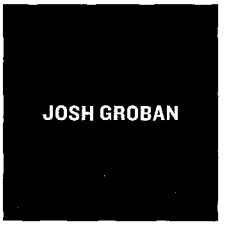
him. Ernesto is asked to appear before a clerical committee to testify.

The surprise of this news from the Vatican is all the more striking because the overall tone of the picture is comic. Ernesto is unreligious, was not fond of his mother, and is ruffled by his family's reaction to the inquiry. Other brothers and relatives see that there is a nice lira to be made out of this canonization. (The primary ecclesiastical stage, beatification, is never mentioned. The Catholic Church has condemned the film, though not, I think, for this lapse.) Still, the tone throughout is satirical, not farcical, made all the more so by a scheme involving a young woman who is enlisted to force Ernesto's cooperation.

The film ends a bit short of a realized conclusion, but its texture throughout is reward enough, savory, ironic. All the cast are satisfactory. Ernesto is played by Sergio Castellitto, who is currently a major figure in Italian films. Though this is not quite comprehensible, still he is ruefully vital in the role. At the last, *My Mother's Smile* conveys that, if Bellocchio is just doggedly hanging on to a career, he is still able to make us feel nostalgia for those high Italian days. ■

DAVID HAJDU ON MUSIC
A Nice Young Man

LIKE NABOKOV IN THIS BUT IN nothing else, my eldest aunt has always been indifferent to music. Yet she recently called me, for the first time since my childhood, to ask if I could get her a pair of tickets for a concert at Madison Square Garden. My aunt is an eighty-three-year-old Italian-American dressmaker, and she wanted to see Josh Groban, who is a twenty-three-year-old Californian who sings Latinate songs of enormous appeal to old women of all ages. The performance in New York on February 11, the Friday before Valentine's Day, was to be the climax of a long tour of grand venues that Groban had undertaken to promote his latest release, *Live at the Greek*, a CD/DVD of an earlier show at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles. As such, the recent concerts have essentially been evocations of a document of a performance of past recordings: mementos of a memento of a memento. And thus is Josh Groban, a pop-culture phenomenon of our day whose music and image are mainly echoes of idealized fantasies about a romanticized past.



In a few years' time, Groban has emerged from harmless obscurity in undergraduate musical theater to assume pointless ubiquity in the casino-and-arena circuit. He had done virtually nothing professionally when, through the recommendation of a vocal coach, he caught the attention of Los Angeles–based producer and songwriter David Foster, a contemporary Medici of pap. At his reckoning, Foster will answer for having laced the air of drugstores everywhere with the hits of (in alphabetical order) Andrea Bocelli, Michael Bolton, Chicago, Celine Dion, and Whitney Houston, among others. (It should be noted in this context that Foster is also a philanthropist and runs a foundation, named for himself, to aid children in need of organ transplants.) Of all the artists Foster has groomed, Groban is surely his cardinal achievement—a wondrously strange living amalgam of imposed ideas about pop artistry, most of them fearsomely cynical.

Through the puppet-mastery of Foster and personal manager Brian Avnet (whose prominent credit on Groban's CDs, "Management: Brian Avnet for Avnet Management," is so desperate to fill space that it is a near palindrome), Groban came up through television, which is the most efficient means of reaching his core audience: women of a certain age who stay at home watching television instead of going out with dreamy young men like Josh Groban. He appeared on a season finale of *Ally McBeal*, singing and acting, even before he made his first album, and he went on to build an audience for his recordings and concerts not through radio, the traditional pop-music means, but on the small screen. He promoted the release of his eponymous debut CD with another appearance on *Ally McBeal*, and also did stints on *Rosie*, *Larry King Live*, the *Today* show, and *Oprah*, and his record sales climbed in suit. After *20/20* aired a segment on Groban, his first CD went from Number 108 to Number 12 on the charts. *Live at the Greek*, the CD/DVD, made its premiere as a PBS special, reaffirming that public broadcasting's vestigial prohibitions against airing commercials do not preclude its programs from being commercials.

Groban's appeal begins with his delicate, boyish looks and his timid manner. He keeps his hair longish and uncombed (or, more likely, meticulously done to appear undone), beckoning anyone maternally inclined to comb it with her fingers and slip a hand in his pocket with a few dollars for the barber. Groban is not small, but he is proportioned like an adolescent; indeed, he has a softness that is uncommon in an era when even adolescents weight-train to be buff. In many of his photographs and between songs in concert, Groban tends to peer down at his feet like a grade-schooler in a recital; watching him perform, as I did recently at an Indian-territory resort in New York state, one cannot help but feel a bit nervous for him and protective of him. The effect is insidious. By inviting our sympathy before earning our admiration, Groban is plying the hoariest sort of theatrical psychology, transplanted from Victorian melodrama to its twenty-first-century counterparts: daytime television and the casino stages.

On websites and in chat rooms for his fans (who go by the name Grobanites, like members of a Biblical tribe, and are as territorial as one), the raving about Groban focuses on his "purity" and how "sweet" and "good" and "nice" he is, especially to his fans. Groban threatens us with the complacency of virtue as most pop singers his age promise the dangers of vice. A counteragent to the hypersexualization of pretty young singers such as Hilary Duff and Lindsay Lohan in youth-oriented pop, Groban offers a kind of hyper-desexualization for an older crowd. Bluntly put, his attraction for women (and men) twice (or more times) his age has an element of sexless pedophilia—or a chaste romanticism, which has shown up from time to time in the history of popular music but has not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been pervasive since the early days of Tin Pan Alley and long-forgotten songs such as "Baby Shoes" and "When You Were Sweet Sixteen."

WHAT'S STARTLING ABOUT Groban as a singer is the power of the voice that emanates from the modest vessel. He has an airy, robust baritone, which he projects with confidence and apparent ease. It is an impressive instrument, well employed mainly to impress. Having recorded accessible classical works such as Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" as well as many pseudo-classical pieces of recent vintage such as Albert Hammond's "Alejate," Groban is commonly mistaken for a classical vocalist, or a "crossover" artist applying formal technique to a repertoire melding high and low forms. Actually, he has something closer to a "legit" theatrical voice than a legitimately classical one. Groban could have been (and may well become in the many years ahead of him) a musical-theater star like his early idol Mandy Patinkin, who prevailed with less natural equipment.

The eye and the ear have trouble connecting what they get from Josh Groban. He looks young and unassuming, but when he sings, out comes a grown man, a powerhouse; he is the Clark Kent of pop. At least some of his fans are no doubt drawn to this incongruity as a self-projection. At the risk of pathologizing a group of people that I have encountered only in relatively small numbers in one theater, I think Groban's audience is, on the whole, a profoundly geeky lot, and Groban may reinforce their self-images as people with far more capacity than their appearances suggest. I can certainly vouch for my aunt, who will tell anyone interested that her main complaint about growing old is that she still feels like a *bambina* inside.

Several million people who are not necessarily Italian-American are responding to a potent Old World quality in Groban's music. Each of his CDs includes at least a few songs sung in Spanish, Italian, or French, as well as songs in English. In addition to light classics, he does vaguely classical-sounding compositions of recent vintage by songwriters from around the world, whom Foster seeks, such as Andrea Sandri, Luis Enriquez Bacalov, and Lucio Dalla. The new tunes seem built on traditional melodies or variations thereof, glammed up through dense production laden with electronic effects. They sound very much like the synth-heavy tunes piped into the lounge of a hotel on the Bosporus, appropriations of folk culture rendered opulently grotesque.

I have no idea what the non-English songs are about, since the booklets of Groban's CDs print the lyrics in their original languages rather than in translation, providing no help to his listeners who do not happen to read Spanish, Italian, or French, while giving them a keepsake of their fandom as a brush with exotica. The accompanying pictures reinforce a neatly crafted image of Groban as a generic continental: he wears a black turtleneck, he stands in a field alongside a tiny sports car, he walks below a concrete bridge that seems to have watchtowers. Then again, in one setting, he has on a T-shirt with a "New York" logo. Then again, Groban is from Los Angeles, and New York is the most European of American cities. So what exactly is the location of these photographs? They bring to mind nothing more than the indefinite foreignness of all the made-up countries in the old television show *Mission Impossible*, in which the guest star who looked like Groban always ended up with Barbara Bain before getting shot under that concrete bridge.

WITH HIS GLOBALIST LEANings and his classical (or quasi-classical) orientation, Groban might seem antithetical to the temper of the Bush era. His music draws upon the folk traditions of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and his lyrics (at least the English ones) are rarely grounded in this or any particular culture, but speak in universal platitudes of mountains and seas and time and sand and sky. Groban might appear to be making a kind of populist world music, customized for PBS and NPR, primed for Rush Limbaugh to tar as elitist and Eurocentric. In truth, however, Groban's work is wholly of a piece with the contemporary political climate. Its aesthetic doctrine is not globalism but imperialism, and the Europe it evokes, for the wish-fulfillment of Groban's more lonesome fans, is the idealized, homogenized Europe of old travel brochures—Europe as an adult theme park, where vacationing Americans could find romance to the sound of a zillion violins.

Grandiosity and artifice are the core attributes of Josh Groban's music. David Foster, who came up in the West Coast music business under the shadow of Phil Spector, works on an epic scale. The CDs that he has produced for Groban, like many of his records for Bocelli, Celine Dion, and his other clients, have been constructed through the accretion of big sounds—voices layered over string orchestras over choirs over rock bands over synthesizers over more synthesizers. Foster loves the synthesizer the way Spector loved sleigh bells. (Groban's CDs include credits for synth programming and sound design.) The music has the same grandness as a Las Vegas buffet, a vulgar luxuriousness. Musically, there is nothing inherently wrong with bigness, of course; without it, we would have neither *Götterdämmerung* nor "River Deep, Mountain High." Foster's mistake is to so distrust his material and to so underestimate his audience that he strips tunes of their charm by inflating them, while obscuring the instruments (and sometimes Groban's voice) under tiers of superfluous digital noise.

The synthetic unorthodoxy of Groban's CDs makes them right at home on *Billboard*'s "Classical Crossover" chart, which the music trade instituted to cleanse the classical chart of the likes of Groban, Hayley Westenra, Sarah Brightman, and Bond (an all-sexpot string quartet whose musicianship is hard to gauge from the electronic mush on their recordings). Traditional classical musicians, among them Yo-Yo Ma and Joshua Bell, also show up on the crossover chart, presumably because their appeal extends beyond the core classical audience, "crossing over" into the larger public. Otherwise, little unites the acts in the crossover list—even less than unites those in the pop category or in jazz. Some, such as Bocelli, draw largely from the classical repertoire; others, such as Westenra, mix it up (some Schubert, some Sondheim, some Bach, some Arlen); others, such as Bond, play instruments associated with classical music (although Bond's work is not remotely classical). Nearly all the above are simply too young and too pretty, as well as too talented, for savvy producers such as Foster not to exploit for their mainstream potential. (Meanwhile the classical charts are peppered with CDs that stretch the definition of classical, such as *Classic Meets Cuba* by the Klazz Brothers and Cuba Percussion, and *Beautiful America*, a suite of music-therapy pieces by Tim Janis, a New Age specialist in "uplifting" music.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Considering how insular music audiences tend to be, I cannot help but wonder how much crossing over is really going on these days. Are the Grobanites developing a taste for Bach now and moving on to "Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten"? Is Bond luring chamber-music buffs into the sonic wonderland of Radiohead? Or does "crossover," like the inverted language of legislative titles, really mean "dead end"? The best term for music such as Josh Groban's is surely the "semi-classical" of my parents' day. It precisely denotes the work's essential fractionality, reminding us that this music can be serious, but only in part.

On a thematic level, this notion of crossing from one realm to another, particularly from the earthly to the celestial, runs deep in Groban's music. His songs are ripe with images of transcendence and orchestral crescendos that conjure the opening of the skies. "Let this be our prayer/As we go our way/Lead us to a place/Guide us with your grace/To a place where we'll be safe," Groban bellows in "The Prayer," composed by his producer. (Foster previously had the song recorded by Bocelli and Celine Dion as a duet, and had the same track released on separate albums by each of them.) While some songs (particularly "My Confession") evoke Catholicism explicitly, most have a nondenominational but overt religiosity, implicitly Christian and often conflated with romantic sentiment. When Groban sings of the "echoes of our souls," or when he intones, "When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary.... You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains," love and salvation are indistinct. In the end, both feel cheapened by the songs' glib sanctimony.

No matter. The fealty of the Grobanites shall not wane, because their idol loves them back. Groban and Avnet go to uncommon lengths to nurture a congregational sense of community among the singer's admirers. He devotes time to "meet and greets" with fans before his concerts, he corresponds with them regularly by e-mail, and he acknowledges them generously on his CDs. For curiosity's sake, I'd love to hear what other Josh Groban albums a different fan base—and a different producer—would make possible. It would be interesting to hear this exceptional voice applied to earthier, more substantive, less calculating music. I would love to see him come down off that mountain and hear him do *Carousel*. And I wonder what he would like to do. ■

Arnold S. Relman

The Health of Nations

Medicine and the free market.

I.

IN THIS PAST ELECTION SEASON, our dysfunctional and extravagantly expensive health care system was pushed off the front pages by concerns about the candidates, the fight against terrorism, and the war in Iraq. And yet the health system's problems will not go away; sooner or later we will have to solve them or face disastrous consequences. Over the past four decades (starting just before the arrival of Medicare and Medicaid), both the system itself and ideas about how it should be reformed have changed a lot, but an equitable, efficient, and affordable arrangement still eludes us.

During the past four decades our health policies have failed to meet national needs because they have been heavily influenced by the delusion that medical care is essentially a business. This delusion stubbornly persists, and current proposals for a more "consumer-driven" health system are likely to make our predicament even worse. I wish to examine these proposals and to explain why I think they are fundamentally flawed. A different kind of approach could solve our problems, but it would mean a major reform of the entire system, not only the way it is financed and insured, but also how physicians are organized in practice and how they are paid. Since such a reform would threaten the financial interests of investors, insurers, and many vendors and providers of health services, the short-term political prospects for such reform are not very good. But I am convinced that a complete overhaul is inevitable, because in the long run nothing else is likely to work.

LET US BEGIN BY LOOKING BACK. Just over four decades ago, in 1963, medical care in the United States consisted mostly of personal transactions between physicians and patients, which took place in patients' homes, doctors' offices, or not-for-profit hospitals and clinics. Only a few of these transactions involved expensive technology or highly specialized facilities, and primary-care physicians could spend the necessary time with their patients. Total expenditures for medical care were about 5 percent of the economy, and the government paid for less than a quarter of it. Health insurance purchased by individuals and insurance paid by employers for their employees accounted for a small part of the rest. Most of this insurance was of the "indemnity" type, that is, the insurance company paid the doctor and the hospital and charged the patient premiums that covered those bills, plus its modest overhead. Most patients were uninsured. They usually paid their bills directly out of pocket if they could, but there were far too many who simply could not afford the services that they needed. They had to rely on private charity or tax-supported institutions. Few observers thought the system was a "market" or an "industry," investors were not much interested in health care services, and hardly any economists or business leaders paid much attention to it.

In 1963, a seminal analysis of the medical care system as a market was published in the *American Economic Review* by the distinguished economist Kenneth J. Arrow. He argued that the medical care system was set apart from other markets by several special characteristics, including these: a demand for service that was irregular and unpredictable, and was often associated with what he called an "assault on personal integrity" (because it tended to arise from serious illness or injury); a supply of services that did not simply respond to the desires of buyers, but was mainly shaped by the professional judgment of physicians about the medical needs of patients (Arrow pointed out that doctors differ from vendors of most other services because they are expected to place a primary concern for the

Arnold S. Relman is professor emeritus of medicine and of social medicine at Harvard Medical School and former editor of THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE. *He is writing a book for the Century Foundation based on this article.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patient's welfare above considerations of profit); a limitation on the entry of providers into the market, resulting from the high costs, the restrictions, and the exacting standards of medical education and professional licensure; a relative insensitivity to prices; and a near absence of price competition.

But perhaps the most important of Arrow's insights was the recognition of what he called the "uncertainty" inherent in medical services. By this he meant the great asymmetry of information between provider and buyer concerning the need for, and the probable consequences of, a medical service or a course of medical action. Since patients usually know little about the technical aspects of medicine and are often sick and frightened, they cannot independently choose their own medical services the way that consumers choose most services in the usual market. As a result, patients must trust physicians to choose what services they need, not just to provide the services. To protect the interests of patients in such circumstances, Arrow contended, society has had to rely on non-market mechanisms (such as professional educational requirements and state licensure) rather than on the discipline of the market and the choices of informed buyers.

Of course, another conclusion could have been drawn from Arrow's analysis (though he apparently did not draw it). It is that medical care is not really a "market" at all in the classical economic sense, and therefore that the basic theories of economics are not relevant to the discussion of the first principles of health care. But our society assumes that market economics applies to virtually all human activity involving the exchange of goods or services for money, and this dogma is rarely questioned. Most economists would acknowledge that medical care is an imperfect or idiosyncratic market, but still they believe that it is a market, and that it should therefore obey economic predictions.

ARROW'S PAPER ATTRACTED much attention from economists and social scientists, and it is generally acknowledged to have been a landmark in the early literature of health economics. It might have had more influence on health policy had not the whole system begun to change dramatically soon after his article was published. With the passage of Medicare and Medicaid legislation in 1965, large amounts of government money entered the health system through these insurance programs. Including the value of tax benefits, the government now pays for more than half of all health care costs. At the same time, funding through private insurance was also expanding greatly, due to the growth of employment-based health coverage that is tax-deductible by employers. The great majority of large- and medium-sized businesses began to offer their employees (and their families) medical insurance coverage as a tax-free fringe benefit. Today more than 160 million people are insured in this way, accounting for slightly less than half of all funding for health care.

In response to the business opportunities afforded by the abundant new supply of insurance money, medical entrepreneurialism blossomed on a grand scale. Private investor–owned health care firms proliferated, including investor-owned hospitals, nursing homes, and ambulatory facilities. Many practicing physicians joined in this medical gold rush, and even many "not-for-profit" hospitals and ambulatory-care facilities became income-maximizers in what increasingly looked like a competitive "health care industry." This economic expansion—this monetization—of health care in the 1960s and 1970s was also stimulated by a large increase in the number of doctors, both American-trained and foreign-trained, most of them specialists. There also occurred a great expansion of medical research and development, leading to expensive new treatments, devices, and drugs—which could be reimbursed by insurance on an item-by-item basis. New technology, new medical and surgical specialists, and piecework reimbursement by insurance were an explosive economic mixture that drove up health care expenditures and generated new opportunities for commercial gain.

Adding to the effects of these changes, the federal courts handed down a series of rulings that decided that the practice of the professions (including law and medicine) should not be exempted from the reach of antitrust law. Beginning in 1975 with a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court in *Goldfarb* v. *Virginia State Bar*, the courts applied antitrust law to professional practice. The effect of these rulings was to deter professional groups and associations from limiting competitive commercial activity by practitioners, which they had previously done through such time-honored measures as suggesting fair prices and banning advertising. The courts seemed to be saying that medical financial transactions were not different from ordinary commerce, and therefore attempts to limit market competition would violate antitrust laws. There was also the implication that competition in medical markets would serve consumer interests by moderating prices and improving quality, as it was supposed to do in other markets. These rulings cowed the American Medical Association and other professional societies, which thereafter carefully avoided any attempt to stem the commercialization of medical practice.

The result of all these economic and legal developments was to diminish the special aura of professionalism and social service that had traditionally surrounded the practice of medicine and kept it apart from commerce. Ignoring Arrow's wise argument that medical care was inherently different from most other markets and therefore required non-market mechanisms for its regulation, economists, health policy experts, and the courts began to think of it as simply a specialized form of business enterprise that was best left to market forces. And for this they could hardly be faulted. Health care had indeed begun to resemble a gigantic industry, and it was consuming a growing fraction of the national economy.

II.

IN 1980, IN *THE NEW ENGLAND Journal of Medicine*, I described this changing face of American health care as the "new medical-industrial complex." The term was derived, of course, from the language that President Eisenhower had used ("military-industrial complex") when warning the nation, as he was retiring, about the growing influence of arms manufacturers over American political and economic policies. Referring to Arrow's analysis, I suggested that market-driven health care would simply add to the explosion of medical expenditures and the growing problems of inequity and variable quality. I was also worried that this uncontrolled industrial transformation would undermine the professional values of physicians, which are surely an essential ingredient of any decent medical care system. Financial incentives were replacing the service ethic of doctors and hospitals, as the providers of care began to compete for market share and larger income. Yet competition on the basis of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

price and quality of services—an essential characteristic of most free markets—was little in evidence, demonstrating again the truth of Arrow's argument that the medical care market was different.

As expenditures on medical care continued to rise rapidly, the major payers (employers and government) began to resist. Employers revolted against the unpredictable and seemingly uncontrollable costs of the indemnity insurance that they were buying for their employees, and they demanded a different kind of coverage. In response, a new and largely investor-owned health insurance industry quickly appeared, which contracted with employers to provide "managed-care" insurance plans, or HMOs. The plans controlled their payments for medical services (they called them "medical losses") by requiring beneficiaries to select a primary-care physician from among a panel of doctors under contract with the plan. These doctors had to approve referrals to specialists and had to get approval from the plan before admitting patients to the hospital. Primary-care physicians were usually paid on a per capita basis and could refer only to selected specialists who had agreed to accept the discounted fees negotiated by the plan. The expenditures and the referral patterns of the primary-care physicians were monitored by the plan, which used financial rewards and penalties to ensure compliance with its policies. Although the HMOs claimed these policies were primarily intended to improve the care of patients and to eliminate the risks and expense of unnecessary procedures, they were perceived by most physicians and patients as restrictions on care that were essentially designed for the benefit of the insurers and employers. And that perception was probably correct.

The government tried to control its costs by contracting with private HMO plans for many of its Medicaid beneficiaries, by encouraging Medicare beneficiaries to join HMOs, and by reducing its payments for services covered by Medicare. Physicians' fees were sharply discounted and based on a "relative value" scale. In a major change in its method of hospital payment, Medicare paid fixed sums related to the diagnosis and the type of treatment, rather than reimbursing for the individual items of service provided and the days of hospital care. Cost-controlling efforts by private and public insurers also included so-called "case management" and "disease management." Under these new approaches, nurses were employed to facilitate early discharges of patients from hospitals and to help ambulatory patients with chronic diseases avoid hospitalization through more careful compliance with therapeutic and preventive regimens. Like other aspects of "managed care," these programs were claimed to improve the effectiveness of treatment, but they also cut expenditures on hospital care.

DURING THE MID-1990S, private managed-care insurance plans briefly succeeded in controlling the rise in the premiums charged to employers, while still making substantial profits for themselves. But there ensued a major backlash from employees, who resented the restrictions on their care and their access to specialists, and this soon forced employers to abandon HMO plans in favor of so-called "PPO" plans that were more expensive but allowed beneficiaries greater choice of physicians and easier access to specialized care. At the same time, the financial pressure from new and more expensive technology was constantly increasing. The inevitable result was a resumption of cost increases for private insurers and an escalation in the premiums paid by employers. Government insurance also was affected by the increased use of technology, and, despite all efforts at control of payments to providers, Medicare expenditures per capita continued to rise almost as rapidly as expenditures in the private sector. Much of the new expensive technology (including drugs) was being used in outpatient settings, so restraints on hospital spending did not solve Medicare's problems.

In an increasingly profit-driven and entrepreneurial medical market, piecework payment for specialized outpatient services stimulated an even greater fragmentation of medical care and a greater use of individually billable items of outpatient technological service. Less attention was given to the continuity and the integration of care, and to preventive medicine. Decreased payments to primary-care physicians and increased pressure on them to see more patients reduced the time that they spent with each patient. As a consequence of all these developments, the quality of primary care suffered, and the difference between the quality of average medical care and the best medical care widened, even as per capita expenditures rose and the number of uninsured and underinsured patients increased. This quality "gap" was the subject of a major report in 2001 from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, which described the many deficiencies in the way patients were being treated and suggested how their medical care could be improved. Unfortunately, the experts preparing the report were not asked to consider how the system itself might be restructured to facilitate the needed improvements.

AND SO WE NOW LIVE WITH a seriously defective medical care system, based more heavily on market incentives than the health care regime of any other country in the world. The commercial tone is set by investor-owned insurance companies (the major share of the private insurance market), investor-owned hospitals (about 15 percent of all community hospitals), and investor-owned ambulatory-care facilities and nursing homes (the great majority of both these markets). The behavior of many of the so-called "not-for-profit" health care facilities is not much different from that of their investor-owned competitors, because they have to survive in the same unforgiving marketplace, which is indifferent to the social values that originally motivated most health care institutions. As for American physicians, their attitude toward their profession has also been changed by the new medical marketplace. To a degree greater than anywhere else in the world, our doctors think of themselves as competitive businesspeople. As such, they own or invest in diagnostic and therapeutic facilities (including specialty hospitals), they form investor-owned medical groups, and they advertise their services to the public.

The total cost of the health care system is now a staggering $1.6 trillion. It consumes more than 15 percent of our economy, and the total is rising steadily at a rate of approximately 7 to 9 percent per year. Obviously, this rate of inflation is unsustainable. Neither the government nor private employers can keep up with rising health costs. Per capita, we spend one-third more on medical care than the next closest country (Switzerland), and almost twice as much as the majority of other technically advanced Western countries. Yet as a consequence of our failure to provide affordable and good-quality medical care to so many of our citizens, we are not getting anywhere near our money's worth. Economists and vendors

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of new drugs and technologies may allege that the life-enhancing and life-extending benefits of many medical advances are good value for the money, but when the mediocre performance of our system as a whole (as judged by such measures as insurance coverage, life expectancy, and infant mortality) is compared with that of other advanced countries, which spend far less, it is an unpersuasive argument. Our best medical institutions and our most advanced technology lead the world in their sophistication, but we neglect the poor and the uninsured.

Our failure to address the glaring deficiencies and inequities in our health care system is nothing to be proud of. A growing number of people are losing their private health insurance. There are now more than 45 million Americans without coverage. Much of this is due to the loss of good jobs, but high costs are also a significant factor. The financial burdens of those who are insured increase steadily, as hard-pressed employers reduce covered benefits and increase the fraction of insurance costs being shifted to beneficiaries. Rising health costs are threatening the financial stability and competitiveness of many American businesses, and are discouraging the hiring of new full-time workers. The government is also shifting insurance costs to Medicare beneficiaries, as exemplified by the recent large increase in the premium charged for coverage of outpatient medical services and physicians' care ("Part B").

What really astonishes me is that so many conservative business and health policy experts continue to hold an unshakable faith in a market solution for our system's major problems. They believe that market forces have not been allowed to contain costs or to improve access and quality because of government regulation, and because of badly designed insurance that prevents consumers from playing an appropriate role. They think that the consumers of medical care in both public and private insurance systems have not had enough influence on the supply of services and have not been sufficiently involved in price negotiations with providers. These days the "free market" is held to be the solution to most social and economic problems, and it is commonly believed that in health care the most important missing ingredient of a free market is the traditional consumer who has the incentive and the ability to bargain for the desired price and quality of services. So it shouldn't be surprising that the idea for improving our health care system that is currently most popular is so-called "consumer-driven health care," or CDHC.

III.

THE TERM "CONSUMER-DRIVEN health care" is used to mean a market for medical care in which patients, as the "consumers" of medical services, would have a lot more responsibility for choosing those services and would share more of the costs. In the most fully developed proposals, providers of medical care (physicians, hospitals, clinics, and so on) would compete for patients on the basis of quality, price, and convenience—not simply for market share, as they do now. Patients, like consumers in any service market, would have access to all the information they need to make their own health care choices. They would choose and own their insurance plans. They would select not only their health care providers, but also the particular medical services they want. Since they would share more of the costs, they would have an incentive to make prudent choices and to demand higher quality. The net result, it is claimed, would be a better, less expensive health care system.

To achieve those goals, most proposals for CDHC include a high-deductible catastrophic insurance plan that is selected, purchased, and owned by individuals with the help of a tax-exempt contribution from their employer. This contribution is used to set up a "health savings account" (HSA), which is owned by the employee and can be used to pay the insurance premiums and to help defray the cost of the deductible. HSAs were created by a provision of the complicated and controversial Medicare Modernization Act that the Bush administration pushed through Congress at the end of 2003.

Under the new law, HSAs can be established by tax-free contributions from employers or individuals. The funds in an account can be invested but spent only on medical services. Unspent money is rolled over each year, as are any interest and investment earnings. HSAs are the property of consumers and stay with them if they change jobs. When the patient/consumer reaches the age of sixty-five, HSA savings can be withdrawn, tax-free, to pay out-of-pocket medical expenses not covered by Medicare, or they can be used for non-medical expenses, but with normal tax liability. Under this kind of plan, employers contribute to the health insurance expenses of employees, but make a defined financial contribution rather than pay for a medical insurance plan that provides a defined package of benefits. Consumers of health care get to "own" a piece of the system by using the employers' HSA contribution (possibly supplemented by their own funds) to purchase a high-deductible plan of their own choosing.

The assumption of the CDHC system is that such a plan would moderate health care inflation by encouraging patients to become more prudent consumers of elective and non-catastrophic health services, because they would be spending money they otherwise could invest in their savings account. It is also assumed that in competing for business, the providers of medical care would try to make their services more attractive to patients by improving quality and convenience, as well as by moderating their prices.

CDHC does not basically change the reimbursement of physicians, the itemized payment for outpatient technology, or the present mixed methods for hospital reimbursement. But some leading advocates of CDHC believe that to facilitate consumer choice in such a system, medical services should become more distinctly separated, specialized, and better identified. Much the way "boutique" stores in a shopping mall offer particular types of products in order to make it easier for shoppers to find what they want, hospitals and clinics would specialize in particular kinds of services for particular patients. Specialists, already the largest fraction of physicians, would become even more numerous, because consumers would be deciding for themselves what kinds of medical services they want, and they would need less advice from general physicians. No change in the organization or the provision of services by physicians would be mandated by law. Instead, market forces would be relied on to produce most of the desired changes in the delivery system.

Medical advertising would be encouraged in CDHC, including direct-to-consumer ads by pharmaceutical companies, physicians, and medical care facilities. To help medical customers evaluate the advertised goods and services and make their own decisions about their health care, the system would also rely heavily on making information easily available to patients through a wide variety of public and private sources, includ-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing websites, guidelines, popular books, and articles in the media. Some more educated and self-confident "consumers" might even consult medical journals and textbooks to decide about their health care needs. Proponents of CDHC believe that most patients, armed with the appropriate information, would know not only what insurance they want to buy, but also what care they want their physicians to provide—or they would at least be able to decide for themselves, except in some emergencies, whether to accept the medical advice given them by their physicians.

When combined with the financial incentives already described, this kind of "empowerment" of health care consumers, it is claimed, would allow market forces to work their magic, thereby solving most of the health system's problems. Some version of these ideas is part of virtually every proposal to change current arrangements for employment-based and individually purchased health insurance. Many CDHC plans have already been tried in the private sector, but without the tax benefits now provided in the new Medicare legislation. Despite the optimism and the enthusiasm of their proponents, it is too early to say whether any of these plans will prove generally popular, or even come close to meeting expectations.

THERE ARE COMPELLING REASONS, I think, to predict that they will not. For a start, high-deductible insurance is not likely to produce reductions in expenditures, except among low- and modest-income families, who would feel financial pressure to cut their doctor visits and their use of other medical services. There is good experimental evidence that high deductibles have such selective effects, which expose the most vulnerable patients to greater health risks. Higher-earning beneficiaries would not feel such pressure and would continue to use all medical services freely. Whatever reductions in total expenditures might occur would be achieved largely through reducing services to those with lower earnings. Adjusting the size of the deductible in approved plans to the income of the beneficiaries might ameliorate that injustice, but it would add to administrative costs and would be virtually impossible to do properly—given the difficulties in making fair assessments of financial need.

If people were allowed to select whatever insurance plan they wanted, the inequity would probably increase in another way. Healthy, young families would choose the least expensive plans with the highest allowable deductible, and those with health problems would be forced to choose plans with the lowest allowable deductibles but higher premiums. The premiums or the required co-payments of the latter plans would spiral upward because of the greater use of services by sicker beneficiaries, so it would become even harder for those with the greatest need for insurance to afford coverage. In this way, one of the most important values of insurance—the sharing of risks over a broad population base—would be lost. Adjusting the contribution of employer or government to the health status of the beneficiaries has been suggested as a means of avoiding this problem, but the relatively primitive state of the art of risk adjustment and the difficulty in applying it to families make this solution unlikely. It also would add greatly to administrative costs.

Contrary to the claims of its advocates, CDHC would impede efforts to improve the quality of care. The improvements recommended by the Institute of Medicine in 2001 could not be implemented if medical consumers went shopping from provider to provider, looking for the desired services and acting to the best of their ability as their own primary-care physician. Neither could the Institute of Medicine's recommendations about quality be achieved if doctors and hospitals were expected to function as independent vendors do in ordinary markets, simply responding to the demands of consumers. The essential task of coordination and integration of services for each patient would be left to the patients themselves, and the uniform adoption of modern information technology would be impossible. A fully developed CDHC market would be chaotic, to say the least, and in such a system continuity of care would be virtually non-existent. It is hard to imagine such a system improving the quality or the efficiency of care. The problems with the quality of our current delivery system would probably worsen.

I do not mean to suggest that a more consumer-oriented system would not be in many respects desirable and possible. For years critics have been saying that the traditional medical care system is too paternalistic and not sufficiently focused on making care more convenient and responsive to patients. They are right. There are many ways physicians could help patients better understand their own health needs and participate more in their own care. Doctors should undoubtedly pay more attention to patients and less to their own convenience. They should also ensure that medical decisions are based on fully informed consent by patients whenever possible. But all this is quite different from what the most zealous proponents of CDHC are urging. They seem to be saying that patients can and should play a sovereign role in selecting their own care, and that physicians should assume the role of mere providers of the services requested by consumers.

THE CDHC PLANS THAT ARE now being advocated by believers in the magic of markets shift to patients not only a large part of the responsibility for being their own doctors, but also the burden of paying more of the cost—and that burden would be heaviest on the poorest and sickest of our citizens. This is surely a denial of the ethical principle underlying universal coverage and the sharing of costs. But the major payers, government and employers, are no longer willing or able to shoulder health care's rising costs, and so they are promoting CDHC. They may justify their views by arguing that it makes sense to shift more of the costs to patients because patients are in the best position to put the brakes on health cost inflation. This might be a reasonable argument if medical care were like other services in other markets—but it is not.

For all these reasons, then, "consumer-driven" plans are unrealistic and unfair, and they are not likely to be politically

The Foundation for the Defense of Democracies

The Foundation for the Defense of Democracies is seeking university professors to participate in our Academic Fellows Program May 28–June 8, 2005.

The program features an intensive, 10-day course on terrorism and is taught at Tel Aviv University. The course of study will feature lectures by academics, military and intelligence officials, as well as diplomats from Israel, Jordan, India, Turkey and the United States. All expenses will be covered by FDD. Deadline for application is April 1, 2005. For more information please visit www.defenddemocracy.org or call 202-207-0190.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

viable in the long run. There is some understandable support for the idea that individuals should be more responsible for the cost of elective or optional medical services, but most people believe that the availability of needed services should not depend on ability to pay. We are a wealthy society, and decency requires that we make equitable arrangements to ensure at least minimally adequate health care for all—a goal that is beyond the scope of market forces.

THESE ARGUMENTS NOTWITHstanding, CDHC plans of one kind or another are now firmly embedded in current thinking about health policy and will surely be more widely tested. A notable sign of this trend, and a clear depiction of the way CDHC will fracture the social values of health insurance, is the recent announcement by the Kaiser Permanente HMO plan that it will be offering its members the choice of a high-deductible, low-premium plan tied to an HSA. Explaining this decision, a Kaiser spokesman said, "If all we offer at Kaiser is comprehensive coverage, then all of the sick people go to Kaiser and everyone else goes to the other plans."

So strong is the current belief in market-based plans such as CDHC, and so powerful are the economic interests profiting from the commercialization of our health care system, that it will take considerable time—at least, I would guess, until the end of this decade or beyond—before a major change in the direction of national health policy becomes feasible. The start of substantial reform will probably have to wait for CDHC to play itself out, just as investor-owned "managed care" did in the last decade. I expect the system to become so dysfunctional, and costs to become so onerous, that the availability of services to the poor will decline even more, the number of uninsured and underinsured will continue to grow, and the inequity between the care of the rich and the poor will reach scandalous proportions. At that juncture, public opinion will probably demand that health care move from market control to some form of government protection and guaranteed benefits. Major reform of our entire health care system might then become a politically realistic option.

Another critical requirement for major change will be the recognition by a majority of physicians that their professionalism is being eroded by the commercial transformation of medical care. Doctors will have to understand that in the long run they cannot thrive as a profession in a market-driven system. They will have to be willing to practice under less entrepreneurial arrangements that are more compatible with the moral and scientific standards upon which medicine has traditionally been based. And they will need to stand with the public in opposing those who have been exploiting the health care system for private gain, and who have added so much to its overhead, administrative costs, inefficiency, and inequity without adding anything nearly commensurate in value.

Closing Night's Nocturne

At the end of an excellent career
the moon combs her hair
for one final time
in the narrow, half-lit window.

Tomorrow, all of her
memorized lines
and muttered perfections,
all of her heights, will burn.

Nothing left but the lights
that for so long framed the face.
And then, too, slowly the lights
to cinder.

Wait for the curtain to rise
again. "The hours"—she said—
"the hours I have now."
Wait for the encore, wait the human bow.

ROWAN RICARDO PHILLIPS

IV.

WHEN THAT TIME COMES, we should be prepared to replace a failed market-based system with a better one that can deliver the health care we need. What kind of system might that be? The question cannot be confidently answered in any detail before the market-based system has run its course, and before there has been some preliminary experience with non-market-based models—perhaps at first in a few states. Still, a few general principles and objectives can be proposed now, based on what we have learned from our experience during the past four decades and on what we know about the essential nature of medical care.

First, since we cannot rely on the free play of markets to control costs or guarantee universal coverage, we should establish a tax-supported national budget for the delivery of a defined and comprehensive set of essential services to all citizens at a price we can afford. Employers should pay an appropriate part of the tax for their employees. These services should include both acute and long-term care, and they should be exclusively reimbursed through a single-payer national insurance plan, with other elective and non-essential services paid out of pocket or through privately purchased insurance. No services covered by the national plan should also be covered by private insurance plans, but the latter could insure services, such as "aesthetic" plastic surgery and private hospital rooms, that would not be covered by the national plan. There should be no billing by providers and no piecework payment in the single-payer plan, thus eliminating the huge business costs and the colossal hassle of the present billing and payment systems in multiple public and private insurance plans.

Second, not-for-profit, prepaid multispecialty groups of physicians should provide all necessary medical care on the approved list of insured services. The physicians in the groups should be paid salaries from a pool of money that would be a defined percentage of the total patient income received by the group from the central payer. The groups should be privately managed but publicly accountable for the quality of their services, and they should be expected to use standardized information technology that could be integrated into a national data system. They should be indemnified against losses due to adverse selection or other costs beyond their control, assisted with start-up and technology expenses, and exempted from antitrust restrictions. They should compete for patients on the basis of the quality of their services. All groups should be open to all citizens, although the number of members for a given-sized group should be regulated to ensure an appropriate ratio of doctors to patients.

Third, patients should be free to choose their own physician group and to switch membership at specified intervals, but everyone must be included in the national plan and belong to a group—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

including politicians. (Lawmakers are unlikely to neglect the needs of a health care system that provides care for themselves and their families.) Physicians should be free to join any group that wanted them and to change their affiliation, but they should not provide services outside the national system that are covered by the latter.

Fourth, all health care facilities (whether privately or publicly owned) that provide services covered by the central insurance plan should be not-for-profit, and should compete on the basis of national quality standards for patients referred by the physicians in the medical practice groups. Facilities should be paid, and monitored for their performance, by the central plan. They should have no financial alliances with the physicians or the management of the medical groups. Teaching facilities should be separately funded by the national plan and be paid for their extra costs, including education. Budgets in all facilities should include salaries for full- and part-time clinicians providing essential services.

Fifth, the health care system should be overseen by a National Health Care Agency, which should be a public-private hybrid resembling the Federal Reserve System. It should be independently responsible for managing its budget and establishing administrative policy, but should report to a congressional oversight committee and to the public. It is essential that the plan be sufficiently independent of congressional and administration management to be protected from political manipulation and annual budgetary struggles.

Much of this skeletal outline would have to be fleshed out later and would undoubtedly be modified with the benefit of further experience. But these five general proposals can explain how this kind of reform could solve the major problems now besetting the market-based hodgepodge that is our present health care system.

UNCONTROLLABLE COSTS ARE the primary problem in our present system, from which most of the other problems result. The reforms proposed here effectively control costs through a national budget cap that could be adjusted annually or biennially in conformity with national need and our ability and willingness to pay. The plan would remove many of the current generators of costs, such as high business overhead, billing and collecting, profit incentives, piecework payment, and the entrepreneurial drive of income-maximizing providers. In the reformed system, physicians, with the consent of their patients, would largely control the use of resources and facilities and would have no financial incentive to either over- or underuse them. Doctors would be paid salaries by their own group managers for their time and effort in delivering the best care for the money available.

A much higher proportion of health care funds would be expended on patient care instead of on overhead, profits, and unnecessary business-related functions. From studies of these burdens on the current system, the net savings can conservatively be estimated as at least one-third of total present health expenditure. That would be more than enough to pay for coverage of the uninsured, for improving the quality of care, and for the added expenses of teaching hospitals. What many people do not understand is that our present cost problem represents not a lack of funds but a misuse of the funds that we already spend. Moreover, the inflation in the current system is due mainly to increasing business overhead and to the unregulated use of new drugs and new technology, driven by business incentives. The proposed new system would eliminate most of those incentives and cause physicians to be much more rigorous in applying professional standards to the use of resources.

Our present medical care system lacks the structure and incentives to improve the quality of care. A not-for-profit system of salaried physicians, who work together in groups that have no financial incentive to do more or less than is medically appropriate, who compete with other medical groups only on the basis of quality and their attractiveness to patients, and whose results are publicly accountable, could be expected to deliver the kind of health care we need. The quality of care would also be improved by a system of competing not-for-profit facilities that are held to national standards.

As for access and equity, the plan outlined here would guarantee universal coverage for all essential services and would allow employers and individuals to share in the costs through an earmarked and graduated tax. The government would be expected to pay the costs of today's uninsured, as well as the contributions it now makes to government insurance programs. Given the large savings expected in this system, the change in net costs to government should be minimal.

The insurance part of this plan is in fact a "single-payer" system, but most other proposals for a single-payer system lack any plan for changing the delivery of health care, and it is usually assumed that merely changing to a single payer would solve the cost problem. In fact, it would not. While it is true that a single-payer system would achieve substantial savings by eliminating much unnecessary overhead, that alone would not control the inflationary effect of new technology and new drugs, piecework payment, and competition for market share among income-maximizing physicians, hospitals, and ambulatory-clinic facilities. A delivery system that is a competitive commercial market cannot possibly control expenditures. Inevitably, such a market tends to grow as it seeks ever-improving income and incurs ever-greater overhead costs.

Medicare is a case in point. It is essentially a single-payer system for the elderly. Its insurance plan operates far more efficiently than most private plans, but it is nevertheless facing a cost crisis because it must pay for services from an expanding commercialized medical marketplace. That crisis will surely be exacerbated when the Medicare Modernization Act begins to be fully implemented in 2006. The failure of Medicare to control its medical expenditures tells us that no real reform of our health care system is likely to succeed unless we change the way medical care is provided, as well as the insurance system. We need to reform the way doctors are organized to practice and the way they are paid. We also need to eliminate private investors from the ownership of medical care facilities. In short, we need to remove commercial incentives not only from our health insurance system, but also from our medical care delivery system.

Choose a Trustworthy, Reliable Web Host.
No Mandate Required.

Ensure your Web site stays up and running. Choose pair Networks as your Web host and domain name registrar.

Learn why over 150,000 sites from around the world call pair Networks home. Visit **www.pair.com.**

pair networks®

www.pair.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V.

ANY MAJOR HEALTH CARE REform must have the support of a large majority of the physicians who deliver our medical care. The Clinton administration learned this to its sorrow when in 1993 it proposed a sweeping reform of the health care funding and insurance systems (based on "managed competition" among private insurance plans) without first consulting with the medical profession. Within a year, the proposal died in Congress without ever even coming to a vote. Although the most important reason for the failure of the Clinton initiative probably was the strong resistance from powerful vested interests in the health insurance industry and the investor-owned businesses concerned with the delivery of medical care, opposition from organized medicine also played a major role. The Clinton administration failed to explain this bewilderingly complex proposal not only to the public but also to the medical profession, which was never asked to help with the drafting of the proposal and was largely ignorant of the plan until it was made public. Not surprisingly, when the plan was announced a majority of physicians were ready to believe the mendacious claims of lobbyists and advertisers who insisted that it was just another version of "socialized medicine." (Remember the "Harry and Louise" ads?) A more collegial approach to the profession might have gained enough support to produce a much different result. Also, if the Clinton administration had done a better job of taking its case to the public, it would have had a much better chance of success.

Since that time, there have been no proposals for major health care reform by either political party. Proposals have been confined to incremental expansions of government support for an unchanged medical care delivery system, as advanced by John Kerry, or to greater dependence on market forces in the private sector, as favored by the Bush administration. None of these approaches is likely to work because they do not deal with the whole system—the insurance and the delivery sides. But even more importantly, they do not address the basic problem with our health care system, that is, increasing domination by commercial forces, leading to uncontrollable costs and unacceptable inequities. The Bush administration and its allies in the health policy community seem blind to this problem and appear determined to press ahead with their version of CDHC. It will almost certainly fail.

A real solution to our crisis will not be found until the public, the medical profession, and the government reject the prevailing delusion that health care is best left to market forces. Kenneth Arrow had it right in 1963 when he said that we need to depend on "non-market" mechanisms to make our health care system work properly. Once it is acknowledged that the market is inherently unable to deliver the kind of health care system we need, we can begin to develop the "non-market" arrangements for the system we want. This time the medical profession and the public it is supposed to serve will have to be involved in the effort. It will be difficult, but it will not be impossible. ■

Helen Vendler
Attention, Shoppers

WHERE SHALL I WANDER:
NEW POEMS
By John Ashbery
(Ecco, 81 pp., $22.95)

JOHN ASHBERY, IN A YOUTHFUL REview of Marianne Moore, cited what he called the "almost satisfactory definition" of poetry given by the nineteenth-century French poet Banville: "[Poetry is] that magic which consists in awakening sensations with the help of a combination of sounds ... that sorcery by which ideas are necessarily communicated to us, in a definite way, by words which nevertheless do not express them." Poetry expresses ideas, the poet claims, but not by means of propositional statements. Instead it relies upon an underlying "sorcery" dependent on a combination of sounds (arranged rhythmically, needless to say) that awaken sensations. If the sentences of the poem were written differently, the evoked ideas would disappear.

Unlike many other "experimental" poets, Ashbery has resisted the notion that poetry need not communicate intelligibly; but he has also resisted tethering poetry to the expository flatness of the assertion of doctrine or ideology. Throughout his writing, he has taken risks to see how far he could go in transmitting, or even transferring, states of consciousness. "Poetry," he has remarked, "is not a stationary object but a kinetic act, in which something is transferred from somebody to somebody else." Ashbery's magnificent book-length work *Three Poems* is written in prose, but it so powerfully summons up the waves of successive states in human life—early bewildered depression, the intoxication of recognizing one's identity, the further intoxication in the discovery of love, the feared subsidence of excitement, the return of dullness, the restorative insight into compensatory wisdom, the buoyant effect of a new love—that at the end the reader feels like an actor borne along on strange flowing and ebbing tides, a character in an abstract plot that is reticent as to time, place, or person, but convincingly "real" as the experience is undergone.

Ashbery's experiments have not always succeeded. Not everyone was convinced that the dual streams of consciousness (two separate columns running parallel down the page) of "Litany" could really be read as one, or remembered well enough to modify each other. Even so, that fascinating labyrinth of abstract autobiography, full of stunning writing, at least gestured toward the notion of the bicameral mind. In yet other risky ventures, Ashbery has based his writing on the oral roots of lyric in nursery rhymes, riddles, spells, doggerel, and popular song: all reminders that the primordial lyric emphasizes the play of sound and rhythm. The title of Ashbery's new volume is another such reminder: although it may sound Romantic, it comes in fact from one of Mother Goose's more sinisterly comic rhymes. (I quote it here from Bartlett, although I learned the rhyme in childhood with Ashbery's American version of the second line):

Goosey goosey gander,
Whither shall I wander?
Upstairs and downstairs,
And in my lady's chamber;
There I met an old man who wouldn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

say his prayers;
I took him by the left leg
And threw him down the stairs.

The persons, the actions, and the locales in the nursery rhyme do what the ingredients of Ashbery's poetry do: they make irregular jumps from person to person, action to action, place to place, nonsense to violence. See, for instance, the jumps in the new poem called "Broken Tulips," which, originating in urban erotic life (but with absurd place names taken from Marlowe), pauses to note the (temporary) suspension of terror while "The cave thing" hides himself; sketches an animated Easter-rabbit cartoon of spring; echoes Hopkins on clouds ("Has wilder, wilful-wavier / Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?"); and subsides into a comically tenacious defense of human storytelling. Although "Broken Tulips" opens on the perplexities of sex, it leaps, in successive moves, to art:

A is walking through the streets of B,
frantic
for C's touch but secretly relieved
not to have it. At Tamerlane
and East Tamerlane, he pauses,
judicious:
The cave thing hasn't been seen again,
schoolgirls are prattling, and the
Easter rabbit
is charging down the street, under
full sail
and a strong headwind. Was ever
anything
so delectable floated across the
crescent moon's
transparent bay? Here shall we sit
and, dammit, talk about our trip
until the sky is again cold and gray.

This hybrid language of literariness and contemporary pop culture is Ashbery's native speech (as it is ours, too, whether we like it or not). But in the second half of "Broken Tulips"—after an initial joke about the TV crawl and a paradox on unwelcome longevity—the poem darkens. God's promise that the deluge will not recur has been broken, like the titular tulips, and the menacing rifle-telescope of night warns us that it will not long comply with our wish to live:

Another's narrative supplants the
crawling
stock-market quotes: Like all good
things
life tends to go on too long, and when
we smile
in mute annoyance, pauses for a
moment.
Rains bathe the rainbow,
and the shape of night is an empty
cylinder,
focused at us, urging its noncompliance
closer along the way we chose to go.

What is to be gained by writing this way? In answer, we need only imagine the poem done conventionally: a first-person narrator evokes his erotic anxiety, his sense of spring, his feeling of *taedium vitae*, his foreboding of a failure of spring, and his fear of death. These topics are so worn one can hardly think of writing about them—and yet what else stirs feeling in our hearts? "Make it new"—Pound's old command—is still as talismanic as ever. Yet the trouble with superficial ways of making new is that they leave out the old. Ashbery keeps the old in—through allusion, echo, and the revival of perennial topics—and therefore can "communicate ideas" after all. He does so best by his ingenious images—from the Easter rabbit to the empty cylinder and the rained-on rainbow—and (as a poet once remarked to me) by his ever-fresh sense of the seasons.

Ashbery's new book is rich in grimly funny images of the dance of approaching death. He and his companion, in a form of Grand Guignol, are "walking the plank / of every good thing / toward the tank of carnivorous eels / singing, chiming as we go / into subtracted Totentanz"; farewell messages announce "sunflowers over and out, / ashes on the clapboard credenza"; and a man is "waiting to take tickets at the top / of the gangplank." "Novelty Love Trot" ends with the poet's companion fixing an absurd gourmet meal while the poet dryly complains of his perpetual loneliness and his recalcitrant work:

You are stuffing squash blossoms
with porcini mushrooms. I am
somewhere else, alone as usual.

I must get back to my elegy.

Wonderful and sustaining as Ashbery's images are, tallying and making recognizable our own emotions, they are only one of the joys on offer in his poems. Outside of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, have there ever been comic opening lines like Ashbery's? The hands-down winner in *Where Shall I Wander* is: "Attention, shoppers." The loudspeaker messages in K-Mart are unavoidable subliminal tenants of our unconscious mind, but their grotesquerie is suddenly lifted into view by Ashbery's co-opting of them for his address to his readers. In a different but equally arresting vein, many of Ashbery's openings prophesy a coming catastrophe. The first line in *Where Shall I Wander* announces, "We were warned about spiders, and the occasional famine"; others assert gloomily (but comically, too, given the Yeatsian echo) that "The passionate are immobilized." These catastrophic bulletins are balanced by Ashbery's other preferred opening gambit, the ineffably bland beginning, often a joke on contemporary cult language:

I enjoy biographies and bibliographies,
and cultural studies. As for music,
my tastes
run to Liszt's Consolations, especially
the flatter ones,
though I've never been consoled by
them. Well, once maybe.

Ashbery's linguistic imagination draws him not only toward allusion and echo, but even more strongly toward parody of this kind. The title poem of *Where Shall I Wander* is an extended prose poem parodying the diction of almost every American form of expression, oral or written—advertisements, manuals of instruction, bar talk, academese, the "poetic," children's verse, fashion babble. It is only by parody that the poet can make us really listen to what is bombarding us on every side, conceptually and verbally. Too long to be substantially quoted here, the poem glitters throughout its headlong progress with ridiculously incompatible linguistic adornments ("Heterophage, we come unblinking into the standing day"; "Wherever a tisket is available, substitute an item from column B, then return to the starting goal"; "geez I don't know the answer, if I did, you—"). As the poem ends, the speaker is one of two hosts who have bade farewell to guests at the dispersal of a party; he comments with complacent retrospection on the picture he and his companion made:

You wore your cummerbund with the
stars and stripes. I, kilted in lime, held
a stethoscope to the head of the parting guest. Together we were a couple
forever.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This closing tableau embodies the peculiar affection-within-satire that is Ashbery's characteristic touch. His comedy owes a good deal to old movies, and the poses of his characters often call up their visual equivalents: here, the freeze frame gives us the cinematic united couple in evening dress, standing at their open door as their friends leave the house. The only way to see yourself accurately, Ashbery implies, is with the stereoscopic perspective of irony, to be aware always of the parodic potential of one's utterance and appearance.

ASHBERY'S REMARKS, IN 1966, comparing the didactic intention of the "committed poets" of the time to the imaginative gaiety of Frank O'Hara are equally applicable to his own work. He says of O'Hara's poetry that it

> has no program and therefore cannot be joined. It does not advocate sex and dope as a panacea for the ills of modern society; it does not speak out against the war in Vietnam or in favor of civil rights; it does not paint gothic vignettes of the post-Atomic age: in a word, it does not attack the establishment. It merely ignores its right to exist, and is thus a source of annoyance for partisans of every stripe.

Even more pointedly, Ashbery dismissed O'Hara's "committed" critics:

> It is not surprising that critics have found him self-indulgent ... the poems are all about him and the people and images who wheel through his consciousness, and they seek no further justification.... Unlike the "message" of committed poetry, [O'Hara's work] incites one to all the programs of commitment as well as to every other form of self-realization—interpersonal, Dionysian, occult, or abstract. Such a program is absolutely new in poetry.

That last phrase—"absolutely new"—is not entirely accurate: Whitman said repeatedly that he was not preaching a program, but actively urging his readers to find their own form of self-realization. Yet Whitman's messianic voice turned his first readers into devotees rather than seekers of personal authenticity. What is new in O'Hara and Ashbery is their refusal of an earnestly didactic tone. Describing O'Hara's poetry, Ashbery staked out his own territory as well—states of consciousness, demotic language, a democratic inclusiveness of mention:

> Surrealism was after all limited to the unconscious and O'Hara throws in the conscious as well—doesn't it exist too? Why should our unconscious thoughts be more meaningful than our conscious ones ...? Here everything "belongs": unrefined autobiographical fragments, names of movie stars and operas, obscene interjections, quotations from letters—the élan of the poem is such that for the poet merely to mention something creates a place for it, ennobles it, makes us realize how important it has always been for us.

This, too, is a Whitmanian program: mentioning something to create a place for it is surely the justification of Whitman's catalogues. But the New York postwar writers, from O'Hara to Koch to Schuyler to Ashbery, extended the things mentioned beyond what Whitman had thought possible.

ENUMERATING HIS NEW YORK friends—Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest, and James Schuyler—Ashbery adds the explanation of their subsequent group title: "We poets were dubbed, somewhat to our surprise, the New York School of Poets; this was the idea of John Myers, whose gallery published our pamphlets and who thought that the prestige of New York School painting might rub off on 'his' poets." Many of the group—O'Hara, Koch, Schuyler—are now dead; as Ashbery recalls that "school" he ironizes his nostalgic language with the ridiculous eighteenth-century periphrasis for a school of fish:

> Must have
> been the time before this, when we all
> moved
> in schools, a finny tribe, and this way
> and that the caucus raised its din:
> punctuation and quips, an
> "environment"
> like a lovely shed.

Among the poets of the New York School, Ashbery has been the most influential in opening up new possibilities for the American lyric. He has done this by enlivening the page with diction of a startling heterogeneity; by being more broadly allusive than any other modern poet, including Eliot; by being boyish and amusing while maintaining emotional depth; by finding a gorgeousness of imagery rare since Stevens; and by taking headstrong risks that have endangered whole books (notably *The Tennis Court Oath*), but which have paid off in original forms of narrative and fable.

Ashbery was formed (after his education at Harvard and Columbia) not only by his ten years in France speaking French and reading French literature; not only by his many years as a writer of brilliant criticism of new painters and sculptors and graphic artists; but also by the relatively marginalized poets that he referred to in his Norton Lectures as the "other tradition," including John Clare, Laura Riding, and Thomas Lovell Beddoes. The sentences of prose writers—not only Proust but also Henry James and Gertrude Stein—have entered the repertoire of his sinuous syntactic style. And at its best it all adds up—when the reader gets used to it—to something strange, exhilarating, cheeky, and moving.

All these qualities can be seen in "When I Saw the Invidious Flare," one of the many apocalyptic poems in the new book. In his seventies, the speaker wishes to sum up, before the curtain falls, the life he has lived. The summary is voiced (as is usual with Ashbery) in a mix of humorous plaintiveness, surrealist imagery, and giddy idiom. As a Stevensian "invidious flare" ("like a blaze of summer straw, in winter's nick," in *The Auroras of Autumn*) lights up the evening sky, the speaker reflects that he has had love, yes, but love has become tedious; that life is, alas, more lonesome after choosing one's path than before; that he has been devoted to learning, yes, but is about to be expelled—or worse, suspended in an afterlife—from the school of life; that (like Thomas Aquinas) he may find at the end that all his learning seems but straw; that the vicissitudes of life have turned his fellow Keatsian chameleons into coarse warthogs; and that his style of writing is criticized from both left and right:

> When I saw the invidious flare
> and houses rising up over the horizon
> I called to my brother. "Brother,"
> I called
> "why are all these chameleons teasing
> us?
> Is it that they are warthogs, and the
> gamekeeper is napping?
> What I'd give for a pint of English
> bitter,
> or anything, practically anything at all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How lonesome it seems when you're
choosing,
and then, when you have done so,
it seems even more lonesome.
We should have got out more during
the last fine days.
Now, love is but a lesson, and a tedious
one at that.
Do they think they can expel me from
this school, or, worse,
suspend me? In which case all my
learning will be as straw,
though there'll be a lot of it,
I can assure you."

Evening waves slap rudely at the
pilings
and birds are more numerous than
usual.
There are some who find me sloppy,
others
for whom I seem too well-groomed.
I'd like to strike
a happy medium, but style
is such a personal thing, an everlasting
riddle.

This is the first part of the invidious evening, setting the stage of the Last Days, warthogs and all, and with nary a sedative in sight (not even the appropriately named English bitter). In the second half of the poem, even the invidious flare wants to be allowed to regress to its more dulcet youth, when it was merely a light at the end of a tunnel. The speaker reflects on the short time left before everything goes up in flames, before (in a linguistic skid to the ordinary) he reaches the end of the alphabet. Earlier decades were supported by knowledge attained from elders—but how many poems or paintings do we have telling us what it is like to live into our seventies or eighties? What will the looming letters W and Z threaten us with? But, he sententiously counters in a rapid drop into religion-speak and therapy-speak, the fair positives of our youth are, after all, not all there is to life; we need to know our negativity as well. The terminal flare (now a speaking part) opens the scene:

Then I saw the flare turn again.
Help, it said, I want to get out of this
even more than you do. I was once a
fair twinkling light
at the end of a tunnel, then someone
wished this on me.
Help me to put it behind me please.

Turning from the blaze to the
counterpane
I saw how we are all great in our
shortcomings, yea,
greater because of them. There are
letters in the alphabet
we don't know yet, but when we've
reached them
we'll know the luster of unsupported
things.
Our negativity will have caught up
with us
and we'll be better for it.

But does old age have to be so brutal, so wasteful, so bestial, so destructive? Why, the speaker asks, are we behaving like the men whom Circe turned to swine, exhibiting our warthog selves? Nonetheless, because he must, he assents to the status quo, in a heaping-up of participles enacting the exaggerated theatricality of apocalypse:

Just
keep turning on lights, wasting
electricity,
carousing with aardvarks, smashing the
stemware.

The poem closes by surveying ending and beginning in one gaze: the comic scene of degradation is followed by an unexpectedly mild signing-off, since rhetorical tantrums, however authentic, cannot (at least not in Ashbery) last forever. There is, after all, something to be said for the Last Days:

These apartments we live in are nicer
than where we lived before, near the
beginning.

I MAY BE MISTAKEN (I HAVE BEEN so before) in my synopses, since Ashbery—with his resolve against statement bearing the burden of a poem—would always rather present a symbolic whole than offer a propositional argument. Still, I have offered these synopses to show that Ashbery does make sense if we can tune our mind to his wavelength—something I am not always able to do, but which is exhilarating when that precarious harmony of minds is reached. Ashbery suggests, he does not assert. His readers are left to skate along the polished surfaces of his text, seeing images, bumping into pieces of diction, flashed at by paradoxes, speeding through tone after tone, as the atmosphere of the poem darkens or brightens.

At the close, ideally, the kinetic transfusion has happened, and we feel its complex effect—in Stevens's terms, "an abstraction blooded, as a man by thought." For myself, I relish Ashbery's many spectacularly imagined versions of the promised end: its invidiousness, our futile thrashing under its glare, our elegiac mourning within ironic glimpses of ourselves participating in a parodic farce, heading toward that "tank of carnivorous eels." Most of all, I relish (in a poem called "Interesting People of Newfoundland") the poet's serene—and paradoxical, parodic, insouciant, and minatory—epitaph for his generation:

We were a part of all that happened
there, the evil and the good
and all the shades in between,
happy to pipe up at roll call
or compete in the spelling bees. It was
too much of a good thing
but at least it's over now. They are
making a pageant out of it,
one of them told me. It's coming to
a theater near you.

I wish that all the poems in *Where Shall I Wander* were understandable to me on the spot, because I trust Ashbery's power to give me a fresh look at life. But I remind myself that time brings about not only the fading of failed experiments but also the wonderful clarification of passages that were perplexing on first appearance. After all, sophomores now believe that they can read *The Waste Land*. And the sententiously reproachful American banalities about "accessibility" have been roundly refuted by Ashbery himself:

Critics of poetry tend to use the word
as a club to beat the poets they don't
like, [saying] that modern poetry is out
of touch with its audience, and nobody
reads poetry anymore because poets
for some reason refuse to be accessi-
ble. Alas, the world is full of poets who
are accessible in that definition and yet
nobody reads them either. Could it be
because they insist on telling the read-
er something he or she already knows?

Whenever an undeniably original poet appears—Mallarmé, Eliot, Moore, Milosz, Ashbery—no matter how alien the content, or how allusive the lines, readers flock to the poems. "Accessibility" needs to be dropped from the American vocabulary of aesthetic judgment if we are not to appear fools in the eyes of the world. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW YORK DIARIST

Photo Finish

UNTIL LAST WEEKEND, I had never taken a picture in Central Park. The idea just never occurred to me. I suppose there's no urgency to capture something that's always there, always essentially the same. Sure, the Park changes slowly over the seasons and over the years. There's the Philharmonic on the Great Lawn in summer and ice skating at Wollman Rink in winter. Caretaking fluctuates along with the city's fortunes. Still, New Yorkers and other frequent visitors can take comfort in knowing that the green space envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux some 150-odd years ago is a constant refuge.

"THE GATES" DEMANDS AN ENTIRELY different attitude. Regardless of what we think about the success of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's massive public art installation, we know it's something Central Park has never seen before and will never see again. At the end of 16 days, the 7,500 orange flags positioned along the Park's walkways will be dismantled and shipped off for recycling. Unlike the Park itself, "The Gates" is available for a limited time only. And so I joined the throng that converged on Central Park last week, Olympus Stylus in hand.

CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE SAID they wanted their work to complement Olmsted and Vaux's vision, highlighting the serpentine paths and echoing the curving tree branches above. *New York Times* art critic Michael Kimmelman suggested that one of the installation's strengths is the way it makes us more attuned to the Park and its intricacies. "The gates," he wrote, "remind us how much those paths vary, in width, and height, like the crowds of people who walk along them. More than that, being so sensitive to nature, they make us more sensitive to its effects." Indeed, "The Gates" has lured people to Central Park at a time of year when it is usually underappreciated. And perhaps the installation has led them to parts of the Park they might not otherwise have happened upon. But I found that the "The Gates" actually makes Central Park harder to see. I don't mean that I was bothered by the crowds. I mean that there is something about its temporality, and the corresponding urge to preserve the image, that disposes viewers toward a heavily mediated experience; everything is filtered.

FIRST, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE "THE Gates" without thinking about how it will soon be gone. The knowledge of imminent departure provokes anxiety. We must look back on "The Gates" at the same time we experience it for the first time. "This is the friendliest you'll ever see New Yorkers," said one woman as she thanked me for taking her family's picture. "It will be so empty when everybody's gone," lamented another woman, surveying the masses encircling the Great Lawn. I overheard a teenage girl ask her friends, "Why would you bring a blind kid to see 'The Gates' in Central Park?" One answer would have been that it's about more than literally seeing. It's about the crowd and the commentary and the snap of nylon in the wind. But one of her companions, revealing more about his own mindset than anything else, responded, "To say he was here." Visitors to "The Gates" had trouble remaining in the present without being distracted by what they would say in the past tense. (In this, I was just as much a culprit as anyone, jotting down notes that I might use in an essay.) Moreover, people seemed overwhelmed by nostalgia even in advance of experiencing the installation firsthand. Nothing epitomized this better than the people I watched accost a "Gates" caretaker at the West 81st Street entrance, demanding souvenir orange swatches—"we heard you would have them"—before they had even set foot in the Park.

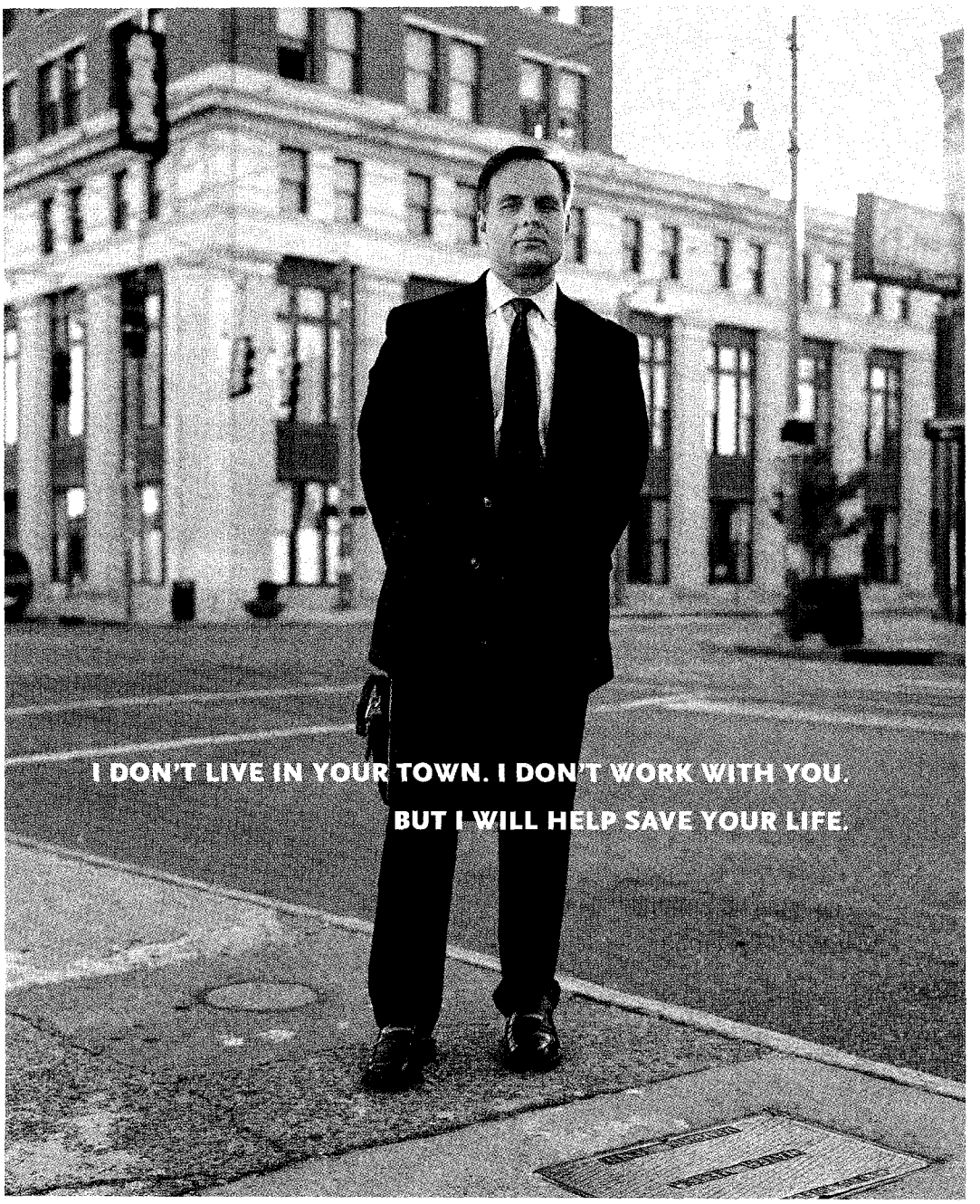
AND THEN THERE ARE THE CAMERAS. Everyone has one. Some people have more than one. There are digital cameras, telephoto lens cameras, cameras on tripods, cell phone cameras, and plastic cameras for kids. This isn't in itself surprising. "The Gates" makes everyone a tourist. (The best way to distinguish the New Yorkers from outsiders: Assume the locals are the ones who dress their dogs in Burberry.) And, of course, taking photos is what tourists do. But, as I looked around, I was disturbed to notice that more people were looking through the limiting frame of a camera lens than directly through their own eyes. They appeared bent on a quest for, as Henri Cartier-Bresson called it, "the decisive moment" that captures the essence of the situation. And perhaps because they figured they would have pictures to reflect upon later, they didn't seem concerned about looking at "The Gates" live as anything more than a series of potential compositions. "Oh, look. This would be a cool perspective with the lamps, and then you follow it around." "Doug, here I am going under the first orange gate." "Mom, can we stand on that rock? Can we stand around the pole in a circle?" "Perfect." "Right there, that's perfect."

TO BE SURE, HEAVILY MEDIATED EXPERIENCE is not a contemporary phenomenon. Visitors to the 1939 New York World's Fair, for instance, took their share of photographs. And they knew the event was temporary. But, whereas World's Fair exhibits were about novelty, "The Gates" is about repetition. It doesn't require sustained concentration. People can notice the light coming through the fabric one instant and then resume unrelated conversations the next. Another difference is the proliferation of technology. Not every World's Fair visitor owned a camera. And certainly they didn't narrate their experience into cell phones: "I love it." "It's getting breezy out." "There are so many tourists everywhere." Similarly, mass communication now is so much more immediate and consuming. Rarely can we experience something first, without having to filter it through someone else's perspective. I overheard one man offer his opinion of "The Gates" merely as confirmation of an earlier review: "I think the art is what they said: the way people interact with it."

WITH SO MANY OBSTACLES TO *SEEING* "The Gates," I admired the father who urged his brood: "Take it in, guys." By then, I had put away my Olympus and was straining to see outside the viewfinder. It was a unique moment in Central Park, a shame to miss. I laughed when my friend, who had been taking shots as we walked along, looked down and said, "Uh, oh. You know what? This film is black and white."

MARISA KATZ

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



WHEN YOU HELP THE AMERICAN RED CROSS, YOU HELP AMERICA.

American Red Cross

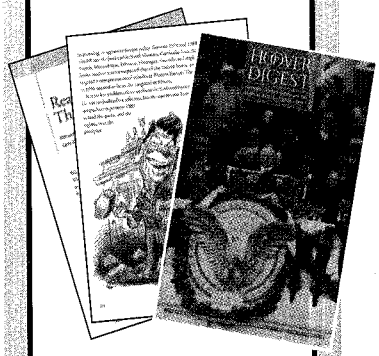
YOUR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION IS DESPERATELY NEEDED. YOUR SUPPORT PROVIDES LIFESAVING SERVICES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES EVERY DAY. HELP US PREVENT, PREPARE FOR AND RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES BY DONATING NOW.

CALL 1-800-HELP NOW OR VISIT US AT REDCROSS.ORG

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Victories against Terrorism

HOOVER DIGEST
RESEARCH AND OPINION ON PUBLIC POLICY



FREE ISSUE

Receive a complimentary issue of the latest Digest without obligation.

Call 800.935.2882 or visit www.hooverdigest.org

The scars are too fresh, the mistakes too profound, the human tragedy too deep for anyone to gloat. But with free elections held in Palestinian territory and Iraq, the emergence of Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian leader, and the whispers of support for democratic reform in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and even plucky little Qatar, one begins to sense that **freedom can prevail over terrorism—even in a difficult part of the world.**

The task ahead is not easy. In the Middle East, for example, the familiar "final status" issues—borders, settlements, Jerusalem, and refugees—will continue to tax the moral courage of statesmen, angering constituents, frustrating allies. Cynical or simplistic voices will sometimes confound those of a more nuanced tone. The trowel and the plastic bomb, both wielded by extremists, may once again clash as instruments of national destiny.

In Iraq, the terrorists retain the ability to kill at random and in considerable numbers. Conflicting factional interests will require painstaking arbitration. Sunnis must join the government, leaving their Baathist or extreme Wahabbi identities at the door.

Still, it is worth noting the similar approach Israel and the United States took in countering terrorist challenges, both acting despite great domestic opposition, little international support, and mounting casualties.

The first imperative was to contain the physical threat. To prevent the suicide bomber pandemic from turning every bus ride, discotheque visit, or dinner out into a Russian-roulette-type experience, Ariel Sharon reoccupied areas on the West Bank and Gaza from which Israel had earlier withdrawn. President Bush courageously endorsed this action as well as Israel's refusal to deal with those "compromised by terror."

The United States was slow to build up its forces in Iraq or to provide the right kind of equipment, problems addressed only in recent months. As important, a coherent plan for training Iraqi forces is now in place.

Second, the operations of both countries exacted a price on populations supporting the terrorists. Israel established checkpoints throughout the most troublesome areas, inhibiting Palestinian commerce, agriculture, and travel. Israeli soldiers arrested thousands of suspects and began building a wall of separation. They reasoned—rightly—that when the burden of supporting terrorism became intolerable, most Palestinians would stop supporting it. From Sadr City in Baghdad to Falluja, to the Sunni "Triangle of Death," the United States began to apply the same lessons. **Resident populations came to understand that the terrorists deliver neither freedom nor pride, only misery.** Intelligence improved dramatically.

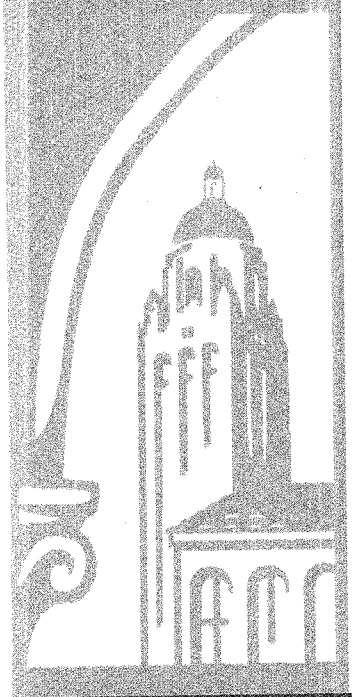
Third, Israel, the United States, and Iraqi democrats always held out the promise of better times for those choosing conventional politics over the gun. For Palestinians that promise is mobility, autonomy, and, eventually, statehood. For Iraq's Sunnis it means participation in political life.

Terrorism is, by definition, a political act. When it fails, its stars lose their luster. On Iraq's election day, Mocktada al-Sadr, the once formidable mullah, was figuratively trampled by followers marching past him to the polls. Abu Musab al-Zaqarwi—with his terrorist lieutenants in custody and his name an embarrassment on the Arab street that once cheered him—cursed democracy and its adherents from his hiding place de jour. Nobody seemed to listen.

—Robert Zelnick

Robert Zelnick is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and chairman of the Department of Journalism at Boston University.

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



HOOVER INSTITUTION

. . . ideas defining a free society

Hoover Institution Stanford University Stanford, CA 94305-6010 Tel: 877.466.8374 Fax: 650.723.1687 info@hoover.stanford.edu www.hoover.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED